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TEACHING SUCCESS AND ACCEPTANCE IN RURAL SETTINGS

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ROBERT NORMAN MILLER

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Robert N. Miller

(Student's Signature)

Box 971
Barrhead, Alberta
T0G 0E0

Date: September 22/89

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Teaching Success and Acceptance in Rural Settings" submitted by Robert Norman Miller in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

R. G. McIntosh
Dr. G. McIntosh, Supervisor

Linda LaRocque
Dr. L. LaRocque

John E. Oster
Dr. J. Oster

Date: 21 September 80

Abstract

Various researchers from many countries have conducted studies to reveal aspects regarding teachers which are most conducive to successful teaching in rural settings. For example, abundant studies have been conducted in several U.S. states and Canadian provinces. However, rural Alberta has experienced limited studies on this topic. It seemed appropriate, therefore, that further research be undertaken in order to add to and enrich the available literature.

The purpose of this study was to discover what grade 12 students and senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead consider important for teacher success and acceptance in this rural setting. Interpretations of the findings were given and elaborated upon.

This research was conducted as an interpretive study in the two schools employing senior high teachers in this County, namely Fort Assiniboine and Lorne Jenken. The nature of the research findings was descriptive rather than judgemental. Therefore, the participant data is intended to provide a better understanding of the successful and accepted rural teacher in this County. All of the student participants are originally from rural settings whereas some of the teachers are former urbanites. The length of service for the two teachers at Fort Assiniboine averages 18 years; for the five teacher participants at Lorne Jenken, the length of service averages 9 years.

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions. This technique encouraged the participants to communicate freely what they considered important to teaching success and acceptance in their respective school settings. It also provided opportunities for the researcher to probe deeper in order to reveal the intended meanings.

Data analysis was a continual and emergent process. The transcripts were returned to the participants for a one week period to confirm data accuracy. This provided the respective interviewees an opportunity to read over their personal transcript, and to make any alterations. Additional interviews were scheduled with each participant to discuss his or her transcript. Further, common categories complete with explanatory statements were developed for each research group. These data were presented to the students and teachers to obtain additional confirmation of the findings.

Both groups of interviewees suggested that prospective teachers should be aware of and understand rural values which are considered important to the community, and especially the students. In addition, the findings revealed that teacher success and acceptance in this County is enhanced when teachers are willing to become involved in the community and adjust to the available amenities. They suggested that this is easier to achieve when the teacher is visible and capable of communicating with the diverse groups in the community.

The participants believed that previous exposure to rural settings is helpful in adjusting to the rural lifestyle, but that good teachers may come from urban centres to live in or commute to this County. Most suggested that a teacher's main role is in the classroom. If the teacher is successful at this station, then the community is willing to accept that teacher for his or her achievements in the classroom. Extracurricular involvements were perceived by all participants as an important role, but must not be overextended at the expense of the classroom teaching.

The participants viewed student success with great importance. They believe that successful rural teachers are committed to and approachable for the purposes of discussing academic and other questions of concern to students. To accommodate limited resources or a variety of student needs, the interviewees suggested that teachers need to be resourceful and flexible in their teaching. But, flexibility and resourcefulness at the two school settings were viewed differently, possibly due to the size of the schools. For example, teachers at the smaller school of Fort Assiniboine consider themselves generalist teachers while at Lorne Jenken Consolidated School, the teachers view themselves as specialists.

All of the student participants looked to their teachers for subject, career, and personal counselling. The teacher interviewees in both schools also recognized that subject and career counseling is an important teacher role. However, most preferred that other school employees or local professional agencies handle serious personal student problems.

Themes were also identified. Fitting-in, community awareness, approachability, personal satisfaction, and adaptability were proposed as useful themes for understanding teacher success and acceptance in the County of Barrhead.

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This research could not have been completed without the full cooperation and enthusiasm of my interviewees. Sincere appreciation is extended to the students and teachers in the County of Barrhead #11 who willingly gave of their time. All of them provided valuable insights into the questions addressed in this thesis. The principals of Fort Assiniboine and Lorne Jenken high schools also deserve recognition for their full cooperation during this venture. Thank-you very much!

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Novels provide interesting insights into the ways people perceived the rural way of life over the last century. Included in these portrayals of rural lifestyle were the hardy farmer and his sons in a big, open land, the courageous farm wife, and surprisingly to many, the rural teacher in the one-room school house. For example, from Storey's (1959, p. 140) novel, *Prairie Harvest*, comes the following quote to describe this tough but rewarding life:

> One could not but be thrilled to look in any direction and see black fields broken by the greening poplar bluffs and know they were all owned by this tall greying man and his sons. A lifetime of toil and heartbreak, at last crowned with success.

Teachers, unlike farmers or ranchers, were often looked down upon because they did not produce tangible things like crops or livestock. The work of the rural teacher during this era was not really considered work (Rust, 1972, p. 29). Most farmers (p. 57) had the belief that the child's destiny would be on the farm so why was schooling needed anyway? Boys would work the farm and girls would remain home and do the housework. It appears, therefore, that these early teachers were not very well respected by the other citizens of the community. From W.O. Mitchell's (1960, p. 163), *Who Has Seen The Wind*, comes the following quote describing the rural teacher:

> You don't expect to be taken seriously, do you? You're only a school teacher. You're not the mayor--the banker--a business man; you're not the wife even of a property owner. What you should do is pick a man of weight in the town.

The pioneer rural teacher did not have a positive image. The teacher was placed by the society in the position of an outsider; the teacher lived in the community but was not really part of it (Rust, 1972, p. 77). The teacher could be viewed as an outsider even in cases where the teacher was born in the area. In an account of the pioneer rural teacher, Chalmers (1986, p. 74) provides a biographical picture of William H. Swift, School Inspector for Athabasca County during the years 1930 to 1935. His description of the teacher's relationships in the community is somewhat at odds with views presented by Rust:

> The teacher in those days was much more intimately a part of the community in which he lived. Rapport with the community was very important. If he did not have its good will his effectiveness was greatly diminished and he could expect notice to move on.

Chalmers (p. 66) further confirms this relationship as follows:

> It is difficult, more than fifty years later with conditions so different, to realize the intimate relationship that then normally existed between teacher and community. When this relationship became weakened or broken, the teacher's effectiveness did greatly deteriorate, and inevitably there were times when there had to be a severance, even though the teacher, might, technically, be innocent of serious fault.

Based on the above, it appears that the rural teacher was expected to adhere to high *community standards* in order to maintain an acceptable level of success. It should be noted that effectiveness was not clearly defined in either of the above quotations. It can be asserted, however, that effectiveness partially refers to the community expectations levied on an individual by the community. Teachers could not participate in activities often deemed acceptable for other people in the community. For example, Chalmers (p. 74) describes a complaint against a male teacher who was serving beer, after school, in a local hotel. The person became known as a *beer-slinger*, an image not conducive to community acceptance of a teacher at that time. It appears that the community, therefore, perceived this teacher's behavior as non-normative .

It is likely that the image of the rural teacher of today has an improved image. It is also likely that the rural teacher of today has something to offer that is perceived by most rural people to be of a more tangible nature than teachers of years past. Teachers are seen to be assisting students in preparing for a "job" or further education that will lead to good wages and a good life in this technological age. As a result, it appears that the community expectations for today's rural teacher are quite different from years past. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that the members of today's teaching profession are more than ever under the watchful eye of the public. Teachers are expected to possess certain assets in order to be considered the best qualified candidate for the position.

The intent of this thesis is to investigate a particular group of teaching professionals -- rural high school teachers -- to discover what grade 12 students and senior high teachers consider important for teacher success and acceptance in rural settings.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to address the following:

> What is important to senior high teachers and grade 12 students in the County of Barrhead, for the enhancement of teacher success and acceptance in this rural setting? Interpretations of the findings will be provided.

Orientation to the Research

I propose to conduct this study in the naturalistic or interpretive tradition. My rationale for basing my work in this tradition is that:

1. It enables the researcher to employ direct contact with the participants. This allows for immediate clarification of specific statements so that the true intent of the meaning is obtained from the participants.

2. It enables the researcher an opportunity to obtain a better understanding of the research problem without making final judgements leading to recommendations.

3. It affords the researcher the possibility of using an *emerging* design process. Owens (1982, p. 6) states, "The naturalistic inquirer will insist on a design that unfolds over time and which is never complete until the inquiry is arbitrarily terminated as time, resources, and other logistical considerations may dictate."

4. It enables me to consider the values, beliefs and meanings of the participants. *Probing* for the information is sometimes necessary in order that clarification of data and, therefore, a *true understanding* of the participant's personal knowledge and experiences is obtained. The interview affords opportunities for probing deeper into the meanings. Owens (1982, p. 7) states, "The naturalistic inquirer will in all likelihood regard gestures, language, and behavioral patterns of the subjects as significant descriptive data" (p. 7).

In describing naturalistic inquiry, Owens (1982, p. 7) states:

> Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human behavior and human experience from the actor's own frame of reference, *not* the frame of reference of the investigator. Thus, naturalistic inquiry seeks to illuminate social realities human perceptions, and organizational realities untainted by the intrusion of formal measurement procedures or reordering the situation to fit the preconceived notions of the investigator.

> The term naturalistic is used in referring to inquiries that primarily *employ direct contact* between investigators and actors in the situation as a means of collecting data, and use *emergent strategies* to design the study *rather than a priori* specification. It develops data categories from examination of the data themselves after collection, and *does not attempt to generalize the findings* to a universe beyond that bounded by the study. (p. 7)

For this study, therefore, naturalistic inquiry provides me with opportunities to probe for data to obtain a more complete understanding of what is important to senior high teachers and grade 12 students which contributes to the success and acceptance of rural teachers.

Significance of the Problem

Children in rural areas, like their urban and suburban counterparts, want a quality education. Teachers who accept positions in these rural areas have a responsibility to ensure that this high standard of education is achieved. Should the research reveal findings that influence success and acceptance of teachers in rural areas, several implications might be drawn. Perhaps university teacher educators, for example, might understand better the need to offer courses or practica which are more relevant to rural education.

It should be noted that only one thesis at the University of Alberta, by Elliott (1988), is directly relevant to the rural teacher. An ERIC and University of Alberta library search revealed several studies on teacher success but these focused on urban areas. Rural studies that have been conducted, however, provide some interesting facts. For example, the Dibski (1980) study suggested that the rural school enrollments in Saskatchewan declined somewhat. Dibski, (1980, p. 1) stated that "sixty-one percent of all rural schools had fewer than ten students per grade." Despite the decline, however, Saskatchewan has tried to maintain quality education that is comparable to the larger urban centres. Dibski (1980, p. 1) emphasizes that in order to maintain a quality education in the rural setting, changes such as centralization, extended busing, and the teacher's ability to instruct several different subjects were necessary.

In contrast, Bandy (1980) conducted a study in British Columbia and discovered that the enrollment in the 242 rural elementary and elementary-secondary schools is increasing. As a result, new teachers were hired. Considering that the Bandy and Dibski studies found differences (increasing versus decreasing enrollments), it seems apparent to me that the current state of rural education needs to be studied in more depth. More specifically, the rural teacher needs to be researched in order to discover how closer relationships between the rural teacher and the people of the community (assumed by many people as a

prerequisite for success in rural areas) can be fulfilled. It is, therefore, necessary to build upon existing studies of the rural teacher so that a more complete framework of understanding might be established.

If the research reveals findings favourable for successful rural teaching, several implications for successful rural education in the future become possible. Perhaps it could provide an opportunity for self-reflection on the part of the teacher. For example, could a teacher with credentials better orientated towards a rural area be more successful? Do I possess these credentials that appear necessary for success in rural schools? Am I providing the best possible education for my students in this rural school? The study could also have implications for the rural administrator. For example, it could have implications for the hiring policy in that rural area. It could provide insights to persons who are responsible for university teacher-training programs. It also presents guidelines to administrators who are responsible for providing a high quality rural education.

Definition of Terms

The following terms require explanation.

Rural: Guralnik (1984, p. 523) generally defines rural as "of, like, or living in the country." Rural is specifically defined for the Alberta context in Chapter 3.

Effective: Guralnik (1984, p. 195) defines effective as "producing a desired effect, efficient."

Success: Guralnik (1984, p. 597) defines success as "a favourable result."

Assumptions

The research has suggested that students are quite capable of providing an objective teacher evaluation. Millman (1981, p. 6) contends that since the student can observe the teacher while the teacher is in action, then the student is able to assess the teacher in areas such as the methods of instruction, achievement of educational goals, rapport and motivation. It was, therefore, assumed that students could provide useful information for this study.

This study has been delimited to include senior high teachers and grade twelve students. It was assumed for this study that grade twelve students have observed, during their school career, a satisfactory cross-section of teacher characteristics and performance. It was assumed, therefore, that they were able to identify the characteristics of a successful rural teacher. It was also assumed that teachers were knowledgeable in the areas defined

by the study problem.

Delimitations

The study was delimited in the following ways: (a) Two rural schools in the County of Barrhead were utilized; (b) Student and teacher perceptions, only, were used to answer the study problem; (c) Grade twelve students only were asked to participate in the study. This was based on the premise that the grade twelve students have spent almost twelve years in school and would have observed a wide variety of teacher characteristics and performance.

Limitations

The study was limited in the following ways: (a) The study was somewhat limited by the knowledge level on the research topic by the interviewees; (b) This study was context-bound. It was intended to understand the successful rural teacher in the context of the County of Barrhead #11 only. The findings, therefore, were not generalized to other settings and contexts.

Overview of the Plan for the Research

The research for this study proceeds in phases. The research method varies with the phase. In the first phase, a literature review was conducted in order to identify *signposts* from the educational and sociological literature, and which contribute to the success and acceptance of rural, senior high school teachers. These signposts were then used to develop a thematic framework made up of the findings suggested by earlier studies which contribute to the success of the rural school teacher. This thematic framework served as a guide for the second phase of the study.

The second phase was a "case study" of a single rural school district. Selected teachers and students in their senior year of high school were interviewed to seek their opinions which account for teacher success in the County of Barrhead #11. The interview guide was based on the thematic framework developed in phase one but the interview strategy was open to new ideas and insights not anticipated by the work done in phase one. In otherwords, the process followed an *emergent pathway*.

In the third phase the transcripts of interviews were analyzed for categories and themes and the report of the research was written.

Chapter 2
Review of Related Literature

My research problem investigates teacher and student views of the successful rural teacher. By *success*, I do not only mean *favourable instruction* within the classroom. I am assuming that other elements exist which influence community perceptions regarding whether or not a particular teacher is perceived as successful.

A recent U.S. poll (Gallup, 1988, p. 33-45) suggests that there is a need to attract top-quality people into the teaching profession. The poll reveals that the public strongly believes in the importance of education but has reservations about the quality of this education. Gallup (1988, p. 33) ascertained that ninety percent of parents believe that a need exists to attract more capable students into the teaching profession. Based on this poll, it is also likely that the general public in Canada --urban and *rural* --has certain expectations for its teachers.

This chapter suggests several important guideposts associated with successful teaching by important authors in the teaching field. A thorough cross-section of these guideposts was attainable because the literature review was not limited to only rural studies. In otherwords, they were identified in context with the particular urban and rural settings. The following "*literature review*" , therefore, presents a brief description of these *guideposts* which might be important to the success of rural teachers.

Delivery of Instruction

Newton & Braithwaite (1987) concluded from a study of teacher education courses at the University of the West Indies the correlation between teaching skills and teaching effectiveness. They emphasized that the effective demonstration of communication skills by prospective teachers is vital to the instructional process. In addition, they suggested that good evaluation and classroom management skills are important teacher characteristics. Millman (1980, p. 1-8) listed favourable qualities in a teacher as: enthusiasm, task-orientation, clear expression of ideas, flexible methods of instruction, and good classroom management. These studies of teacher effectiveness were based on pupil achievement. Good & Brophy (1984) and Rosenshine & Furst (1979) concluded from their studies that teacher enthusiasm usually leads to student enthusiasm. This reflects in improved student attentiveness and achievement.

Elliott (1988) conducted a quantitative study in the Westlock School Division #37 located approximately eighty kilometres northwest of Edmonton, Alberta. She entitled her thesis, "The Student's Perceptions of Teaching Performance." The sample site consisted of nine rural junior high schools and a total school population of 2110 students. The random sample size consisted of 636 students of which 333 were male and 303 were female. One of the questions asked in the questionnaire was, "Are students' opinions of teaching performance positive or negative?" Of the 636 student responses, 68.6% of the respondents indicated that their class was a *nice* place to be. They described teacher performance in the following ways: The teacher made the class interesting, the teacher treated everyone equally, and a reasonable amount of homework was administered (Elliott, 1988, p. 30-32).

On the basis of these studies, major aspects regarding teachers that appear to contribute to teacher success include: expression of enthusiasm towards the students by the teachers, concern about the students by the teacher, appreciativeness of the student's efforts by the teacher, enjoyment of their subject(s), and fair yet demanding expectations of the students. In addition, they talked to the students, not down to the students, and they got their points across to the students. I feel that the *delivery of instruction* (teacher-student interactions) that is utilized by good and bad teachers, has been identified as an important *guidepost* for this study. However, it is not necessarily unique, of course, to the rural teacher.

Flexibility and Resourcefulness

Dawson City, Yukon has become famous for the Gold Rush of 1898. Although the Gold Rush is long over, the town remains with a population of approximately 2,000 citizens. The nearest community of any size is Whitehorse with a population of 19,000 people. The distance between the two communities is approximately 325 miles. Davidson (1986) illustrates one of the difficulties of teaching in this remote, northern community by stating:

> All the materials I had available to me in the regular textbook list were 15-20 years old. This mattered little in History 12 (World History since 1875), because *it was easy to supplement* the material. It mattered a great deal in Social Studies 10 or lower, where it was hard to find material the students could handle. (p. 92)

In describing the diverse roles of rural teaching, Miller (1988) states:

> In small, rural schools, teachers may find themselves in the enviable position of having a smaller class size than a teacher from an urban district. If the teacher works in a one room elementary school, he or she may also discover the class consists of students from several grade levels. Often, even in a larger rural school, classes may be organized into a combination classroom. For example, a district may choose to combine grades three and four because of decreased enrollment at these grade levels. This creates a unique and demanding teaching situation that many teachers are not prepared to handle. At the high school level, similar situations exist. A teacher may be called on to teach a subject outside the teacher's area of preparation or experience or to teach a class that contains both junior and senior high students. (p. 4)

Miller suggests that prospective rural teachers require flexible planning and communication skills (p. 4). The rural teacher should be prepared to adapt to the preferred style of the particular community. In order to accomplish this, various teaching strategies will be required. For example, the teacher might be required to develop strategies for working with multiage groups such as peer tutoring, cooperative learning, or individualized instruction (p. 4).

Material resources are often limited in rural schools and teachers must often instruct courses that are unfamiliar to them. In order to prepare for and teach subjects outside of their specialization, rural teachers require skills in information management (p. 4). In otherwords, they need to flexible, creative, and comprehend how to gather appropriate material resources and then prepare the materials for presentation to the students (p. 4).

Bandy (1980) conducted a quantitative study from 1979 to 1980 entitled, "The Identification of Skills and Characteristics Needed by Country School Teachers." The study focused on grade 2 and grade 5 teachers. In the initial stage, questionnaires were administered to a random sample of principals of fifty British Columbia schools. This was followed up with questionnaires to 500 rural teachers and fifteeen interviews of school trustees in the Williams Lake and Shuswap school districts. Once the characteristics and needs of teachers were determined and then analyzed, recommendations were suggested for the development of a training program for teachers. Bandy (p. 91) lists several characteristics perceived by school trustees that are considered necessary for success in rural schools as follows: flexible in nature, good interpersonal and communication skills, patient, tolerant, open-minded, competent, innovative, and high moral standards. Principals suggested that teachers should be prepared to teach several multigrade classrooms (p. 103). Multigrade classrooms and less-specialized duties are a reality! A second *guidepost* , therefore, is that the successful rural teacher is a person who is flexible and resourceful.

Dibski (1980, p.32) describes the rural teacher as a "generalist". The teacher must be prepared to supervise students (e.g., extended busing), sponsor extra-curricular activities,

and administer the community use of the school. A generalist is a person who must be flexible in order to accomplish such a variety of responsibilities. A generalist teacher would also need to be resourceful. For example, rural schools might not have the diversity of material resources that urban schools have.

Scott (1984, p. 2) describes rural schools in Nevada. These remote rural schools are located as far as 350 miles from a central administrative office. Twenty-six of the schools had only two or three teachers and they were responsible for instruction in *grades one through eight*. Twenty-one of the schools are one-room schools. Sixteen of the high schools have student enrollments of 100 or less. Some of the students live more than 100 miles away.

Scott (p. 3) reports that teachers in rural Nevada must be resourceful due to a lack of funding. For example, limited special services are provided to the students. Art, counseling services, and physical education are included into the teacher's own teaching agendas. Several teachers have developed for use *instructional resource kits* to try and fill the learning gaps that are experienced by certain students.

In describing the rural teacher, Scott (p. 4) states:

> Teachers in small remote schools have to be competent generalists, with skills in individualizing instruction for all students, in planning instruction according to individual learning styles, in grouping children for instruction, managing multiple activities, and in using creativity and ingenuity in working with children and using local resources. The nature of the remote schools requires, in essence, that all students have an individualized program, whether they are handicapped or not.

Scott provides an interesting example to illustrate why rural teachers must be generalists (p. 4). One teacher in Denio school in Humboldt County in Nevada has sixteen students distributed over eight grades. This means that the teacher has forty-eight preparations (eight grades times 6 subjects). The school is located more than 100 miles away from the central administration office. As a result, inservice training, support services, colleague-to-colleague sharing, and resource exchanges are difficult to obtain (p. 4). The teacher, therefore, must deal with differences in student ability and a lack of diverse school resources. According to Scott (p. 4), "by mastering the multigrade classroom, these seasoned people have come to understand individual differences, instructional grouping, and the reinforcement of learning."

A 1982-83 school year study conducted by Barker (1985) in forty-five U.S. states but with a particular emphasis on the state of Oklahoma produced some interesting data on the duties of rural teachers. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed to 237 public K-

12 Oklahoma school districts which enrolled fewer than 1000 students. There was a 64.3 percent response rate from the district superintendents (p. 3). Barker emphasizes that Oklahoma is "one of the leading states in the nation in relation to the number of rural districts which make up the state's public school system" (p. 12).

Superintendents in Oklahoma reported that only 11.1 percent of the teachers taught in areas outside of their specialty (p. 6). The mean number of daily preparations, however, for the secondary teachers was given as 3.2 (p. 6). In addition, 39.9 percent of these teachers taught four or more subject areas. Furthermore, 16.6 percent of the elementary teachers taught two or more grade levels in the same classroom (p. 6). This appears to support previous studies that rural teachers should be prepared to be generalists. The study also determined that there was an approximate annual teacher turnover rate of 13 percent (p. 6). Special education programs were available in 93.2 percent of the districts but only 54.5 percent had the services of a school counsellor (p. 7). Librarians were available in only 60.0 percent of the districts while a school nurse was found in only 11.5 percent of the districts (p. 7). A school psychologist was employed in only 20 percent of the districts (p. 7). Physics was offered in only 50.0 percent of the school districts as part of the curriculum. Other findings included: (a) computer science was offered in 42.9 percent of the districts and, (b) calculus was offered in only 19.0 percent of the districts, whereas (c) 83.3 percent of the rural districts offered vocational agriculture courses as part of the curriculum (p. 11).

The above findings were compared to research findings for the nation. The focus of the national study was K-12 districts with an enrollment of 900 students or less (p. 8). For example, Barker discovered that 79.4 percent of the school districts in the U.S. did employ counsellors, 80.9 percent had the services of a librarian/media specialist, and 67.7 percent offered physics as part of their school curriculum. Computer science was offered in 60.3 percent of the districts, calculus was offered in 35.9 percent of the districts, but only 63.1 percent of the national districts offered vocational agriculture (p. 10). The study also determined a teacher turnover rate of only 8.6 percent in the national survey results (p. 9).

Barker draws several implications based on the research findings. The study suggests that small school districts in Oklahoma do face additional pressures in comparison to the larger districts. Barker states "larger districts with more resources and professional staff are able to offer greater program depth and more activities" (p. 8). Barker continues by stating:

> Prospective teachers assigned to small schools need to anticipate that the probability of *teaching more subject or multiple grades* will be much greater when accepting employment in a rural school. Due to the small size of school

> staffs, the opportunity to interact with other professional educators--particularily those in the same subject field--will also be more limited. (p. 12)

Coleman and LaRocque (1986) help to support the premise of the previous studies that rural teachers are often generalists in rural settings. For example, one teacher's assignment included English 8, English 9, English 10, Math 8, Math 9, Math 10, Science 8, Science 9, Science 10, Phys. Ed. 8, Phys. Ed. 9, Phys. Ed. 10, Foods and Nutrition 9, French 8, French 9, and French 10 (p. 331). With the quantity and diversity of this assignment, it can be inferred that this teacher must either possess the required knowledge to teach these subjects or be capable of learning the material. In either case, the teacher must be prepared to adapt to different expectations.

It appears, therefore, that the quality of education in rural settings might somewhat be related to the abilities of the rural teacher to compensate for the reduced diversity of resources. Cross and Murphy (1983) state:

> The quality of education provided by a small rural school, especially in a remote area, is influenced by the individuals who teach in these educational institutions. Usually,these teachers do not have access to the same support services, media equipment, collegial contacts or library facilities as their colleagues in urban centres. These teachers have to creatively utilize natural, physical and human resources in tcommunity to illustrate the concepts which they discuss in class. Rural teachers also have to adjust to being continuously in the 'public eye', a situation which can be frustrating for many individuals. (p. 3)

Supporting many of the previous findings regarding teacher flexibility in rural settings is an interesting study by (Youngberg, 1986) conducted mainly in rural British Columbia over a period of seven months. The purpose of the research was to determine if the school achievements of rural and urban students differ because of the respective educational settings that the students are located. Ninety-six grade 10 rural students in three rural schools and a random sample of urban students participated in the study. Questionnaires, document analysis and interviews were utilized as the research instruments.

Some of the situational findings from this study which appear to enhance the necessity that teachers considering teaching positions in rural schools be prepared to be competent generalist teachers in many rural settings and be capable of being innovative and resourceful in a variety of subject areas include:

1. The students suggest that rural teachers are hired to teach mainly academic subjects. The small school populations, however, often necessitate that these teachers instruct elective courses that they are not qualified to teach nor have any desire to teach

(p. 72). The students feel that this lack of teacher expertise in elective subjects lessens the quality of education for the rural students.

Educators at the senior secondary school agreed with this by noting that rural students were often weak in the progressive electives such as Home Economics, Typing and language courses. The reasons educators gave for the weaknesses were similar to those given by the student respondents (p. 73).

According to the respondents, the negative side of having fewer students in each grade was that two or three grades were often grouped together in a single classroom and taught by a single teacher. Multigraded classrooms were common in both Prespatou and Buick Creek in most subject areas, but at Clearview they were necessary only in specialty subjects (p. 80).

Further to the multigrade classroom aspect, Youngberg states:

> The most serious complaint, concerning multigraded classrooms, was that when two or more separate curriculums were taught the result was less teacher time. When the teacher was addressing one grade, the other students had to work on their own, with limited assistance from the teacher. The obvious impact multigraded classroom had on teachers was to increase the preparation necessary. Extra preparation, according to several educators, meant less preparation time for each lesson. (p. 81)

2. The students feel that rural school facilities are often not equivalent with those in urban schools. For example, rural libraries provided to the student insufficient reading volumes for personal and academic needs (p. 86). The students suggest that the academic materials present was inadequate to meet the expections of the teachers. In addition, science labs were often orally conducted since the equipment necessary to provide practical lab situations was unavailable (p. 86).

In summation, Barker and Beckner (1985) report that rural teacher should be flexible and innovative in their teaching skills by stating, "Due to limited resources, rural educators are frequently required to use outdated and/or inadequate supplies in their teaching" (p. 2). Based on the above reports, it is likely that success in rural schools is enhanced if the teacher has the capability to meet the needs and expectations of the particular rural setting.

<u>The Teacher as an Involved Member of the Community</u>

In describing the teachers role in community life, Miller (1988) states:

> Schools often serve as the center of events in small, rural communities. Parents and community members come to expect that the school will offer all types of

> athletics, provide space for the 4-H club and the Boy Scouts, and be made available for various community service activities. The supervision of these community events usually falls to the school personnel. As a result, teachers are expected to assume extra-curricular duties. (p. 5)

Being an involved member of the community appears to be a *third important guidepost* to successful teaching in a rural community. In order for a teacher to successfully *fit in* to a rural community, Olsen (1945, p. 394) states:

> The teacher who understands the ongoing life of his community, its *mores and customs* , factions and cleavages, *needs and values* will be strategically able to make intelligent professional adjustments. It is well to know community "causes" and their leaders, the important political and business figures, the occupations and prejudices of school board members, causes of previous friction between town and school, the community blocs which support purposes similar and antagonistic to the purposes of the school, and the like. Know your community!

Zetler and Lahren (1982) appear to support the above comment by stating, "Small communities constitute definite micro-social systems based on localized values and attitudes. Teachers who can accurately observe, interpret, and accommodate to these environments are at an advantage" (p. 3).

A case study report completed in rural Scotland by Forsythe (1983) determined that rural school tends to be a meeting place for the local citizens (p. 4). As a result of the school's symbolic value as a social gathering place, the community's identity is enhanced (p. 4). For example, there are fund-raising whist evenings and the annual Christmas party. Forsythe states:

> In bringing people together from all sectors of the community, regardless of age or religious background, the Christmas party helps to bridge the differences which divide the community. Social ties are reinforced and community identity reaffirmed. This function is quite explicit in the antics of the party's Santa Claus. (p. 156)

Forsythe describes this example as follows:

> A local man is Santa Claus, and he hands out prizes and presents with special local meaning. A lady terrified of cows got a cowboy hat, and granny-to-be got a nappy. Everyone understands the jokes and the meaning -- children too -- and it makes a community feeling. (p. 156)

Forsythe also reported that the community expects the teacher(s) to be reasonably involved in these extra-curricular activities. In making reference to Mrs. Black, a local primary teacher, Forsythe states:

> Mrs. Black is busy with the demands of teaching and family and does not take part in a large number of extra-curricular activities. However, she believes that a teacher should be available to participate in such things if local people want her to do so. (p. 146)

Forsythe continues:

> I think she should try to do what's asked of her. But it's very difficult in a place like this. . . .There's not really very much for me to be involved in. If there are public meetings called, etc. I think you must go along and listen and express an opinion keep abreast. But I don't think it's the teacher's duty to sort of be the life and soul of every party, you know? (p. 146)

In summation, Forsythe suggests that "the case studies show very clearly that relations between the school and the community usually reduce to relations between the teacher and the community" (p. 158). The community expects the teacher to instruct their children according to a pre-set agreement between the teacher and citizens (p. 158). In addition, the teacher is never anonymous and must be able to effectively relate to the citizens (p. 159). Forsythe states "For a teacher from a large-scale urban environment, learning the subtle social skills required to *adapt* successfully to a small face-to-face community may not be easy" (p. 159). It appears to be vital, therefore, that the teacher-community match is harmonious so that the quality of the relationship over time is a fruitful one (p. 159).

In a study conducted in the Radville School Division #67 in Saskatchewan between 1982 and 1983, Dibski (1983, p. 147) stated "that teachers pointed to an ongoing need for involvement of the community in school life, on the one hand, and the involvement of teachers in community events, on the other." Dibski (p. 143) stated, "Indeed, in rural communities the school frequently serves as a centre of community life." Bandy (1980, p. 91) also stated that the teacher should be community-minded and consider the community to be *home*.

A quantitative study by McBeath (1983), conducted in rural Alaska, randomly selected over 300 teachers. The intent of the study included an assessment of possible school-community relationships. A 96.5% response rate was achieved. It was determined (p. 5) that "the community school is the premier social organization in many rural Alaska places, and teachers' on-the-job activity puts them in contact with most community adults." The teachers participated in various community events. For example, 46% of the teachers visited with community members (p. 4). Fifty-three percent of the teachers attended after-school activities while thirty-three percent attended other community events

(p. 4). "It was determined that fifty percent of the teachers had close community ties, participated in church, sports, arts, crafts, hunting, and social activities" (p. 1).

Swanson (1984), in her description of rural, one-room schools of Mid-America from about 1825 to 1984, describes some of the activities that the rural schools and teachers participated in. She states (p. 11):

> The schools had a vital role in every rural community, serving not only as a house of learning but as a convenient rallying point, a place for picnics, polling places and in some cases temporary quarters for church services. Old-timers talk nostalgically of other activities there such as singing schools, spelling bees, debates, box socials, community get-togethers for Halloween, the annual Christmas program and the final day of school picnic which was a celebration in itself.

Swanson (1984, p. 14) continues by stating:

> One of the most difficult chores for the rural teacher was special programs marking the Yuletide or other holidays. Much school time was taken in getting ready for such special events. The entire community would turn out at such occasions to hear Jimmy or Joan recite portions of famous orations, readings, and poems. Short plays, musical skits and school songs were also a part of the program. The rural schools were jammed with 75 to 100 people at such festivities and after the program the mothers would bring out food-filled baskets for an old-fashioned pot luck supper which everyone enjoyed.

Scott (1984, p. 3) describes the rural setting in Nevada. He states:

> Since distance often precludes the formation of organized clubs or social organizations, the school tends to be the centre of the community and the setting of many activities in which the adult population is directly involved. Community members feel that they own the school and have a stake in it.

Scott (1984, p. 3) continues his description of the role of the rural teacher, as follows:

> No teacher will have difficulty becoming part of the community if he or she wants to. The community relates to the school as its centre. The teacher is the centre of the school and is regarded as an important and essential asset. What students learn is much more closely related to the skills and personality of the individual teacher than is true in large metropolitan schools.

Therefore, the literature suggests that prospective rural teachers should become involved in the respective community. The nature and intensity of teacher involvement varies. However, some personal involvement appears to enhance teacher success and acceptance from the various community groups.

Personal Experience with Rural Settings

Haughey and Murphy (1983, p. 18) state:

> When new teachers join the staff of rural schools they are outsiders. Neither their previous experiences nor their preparation programs have prepared them for the experiences they will encounter. *The values, social standards and norms of behavior of the communities are different from those with which they are familiar*. The location of the schools isolates them physically from friends, relatives and social activities they have enjoyed in the past. Whether these teachers remain for a period of time in rural schools depends upon how quickly they adjust to rural life.

The literature indicates the teacher's prior personal experience with rural settings is also important to teacher success. For example, Forsythe (1983) suggests that teacher success in rural communities is somewhat related to "previous experience of living in a small rural community, and if the teacher has a personal link with the local area" (p. 160). Forsythe reports that these teachers might have lived in the country for several years before becoming a teacher and that they likely taught at other rural schools (p. 160).

Williams and Cross (1985) describe an *early field experience* study completed in 1980 and conducted by Bandy in several rural schools in British Columbia. This study was based on previous research from a 1980 B.C. study that identified special skills and characteristics needed by country school teachers (p. 4). The study proposed a rural orientation for teachers and also community involvement (p. 11). It also identified some of the reasons why rural teachers leave rural positions. For example, there was limited access to urban amenities; there was not enough community support; there was too much isolation; and there was another teaching opportunity closer to an urban area (p. 11).

For the Williams and Cross study (p. 4), *rural* was defined as:

Rural Elementary:	An elementary school in B.C. which has five or fewer classrooms and 100 or fewer students. It is located at least 30 miles from any community of 15,000 or more people.
Rural Secondary:	B.C. secondary school with 200 or fewer pupils and located at least 30 miles from any community of 15,000 or more people.

Student selection (p. 3) for the early field experience program was limited to students who had at least two years of relevant course work or an appropriate degree. Students were required to live in the rural community while gathering information for the early field

experience course (Williams and Cross, p. 3). Some of the factors that were given consideration when the program was developed include overcoming a sense of loneliness and isolation, developing a close liaison between school and community, and coping with a lack of personal privacy in rural areas (p. 7). Williams and Cross (p. 9) state, when referring to the training program for rural teachers, that:

> The program should provide actual 'external' experiences. Student teachers should have experience with the climate as it affects rural communities. The remoteness of the school affects the ease of communication with the community, and the school district.

Oswald (1983, p. 7) supports and describes some characteristics to maintain and enhance the quality of the above early field experience program. They include:

1. It should emphasize the preparation for multi-graded classrooms and emphasize the process of learning rather than subject matter content. It should provide a variety of preservice experiences.

2. The program should be flexible and adaptable. It should stress skills needed by rural teachers and provide an awareness of the role of the teacher in rural settings.

3. The training program should maintain an extended early field experience for the students teachers who have aspirations of teaching in rural settings.

Bandy (1980, p. 103) also acknowledges that it is an asset to experience rural living before accepting a rural position. It is assumed that students who have extensive rural experiences feel more at home in rural teaching. They would, therefore, be less likely to leave the rural district.

Scott (1984, p. 5), in describing the preparation of teachers for Nevada's remote and rural schools, states:

> Nevada's remote and rural schools are in need of adequately and appropriately trained teachers and paraprofessionals. Colleges and universities are generally not producing personnel who know how to handle multiple preparations to individualize instruction, and to understand curricular sequences across subjects and grades. . . .Teachers need to be sensitive to learning styles that are manifested by children in their classrooms. . . .Teachers in rural and remote schools must particularly be critical consumers of materials, with their ability to identify and match instructional materials to individualized student needs.

Scott believes that colleges and universities should send teacher trainees to rural sites for internships and practical experiences (p. 5). There should be an emphasis on rural skills and understandings. The trainee would also be exposed to the positive features of rural settings (p. 5).

At present, the University of Nevada in Reno does provide some preservice training in Elko County (p. 5). Scott reports, however, that the university is reluctant "to place trainees in situations where they cannot be immediately supervised by faculty members" (p. 5). He argues that this problem might be overcome if higher education appointed master teachers in remote areas to work in co-operation with faculty members for the precise purpose of supervising trainee practica in such schools" (p. 5).

In describing the unique characteristics of rural schools and communities, Miller (1988) states:

> Many school and community conditions differentiate working in larger urban or suburban districts. When attention is shifted to the rural community as a social and cultural context of the school, these rural-urban differences become even more complex, reflecting differences in shared values and beliefs. It is this cultural context of working in a rural setting that poses the greatest obstacle for preparing teachers to work in isolated communities and may well be the major cause for teacher turnover. (p. 2)

Miller (1988) states that "Many teacher educators situated in rural settings have known for a long time that teachers need *to be prepared* to live and work in a rural community" (p. 20). This is especially evident for new teachers to rural communities. Teachers need to be made aware that multigrade instruction is a reality of rural schools. In addition to limited professional development opportunities, there will likely be cultural and geographical isolation which might affect the teacher's performance and his or her eventual lack of desire to be in rural settings (p. 21).

Referring to rural teacher education programs, Miller (1988) states that "because of the diversity of rural populations and environments, it is unrealistic to suggest that a "one best" set of programs, activities, courses or experiences exist" (p. 13). Teacher training programs, therefore, should be made specific to the region that the prospective teacher wants. For example, if the teacher desires a Native village school in Alaska, then the specific characteristics of that location need to be identified and included in the program (p. 21). In order that teacher success might be enhanced, therefore, Miller suggests that *future* teacher education programs should ensure that the teacher education content is matched to the rural setting (p. 22). Rural teachers, therefore, need to be increasingly self-reliant. They "need to be good problem solvers, able to assess their community and school learning environments, able to draw on community resources and skillful at curriculum integration" (p. 23). Miller (1988) states:

> Clearly, when working in a rural community that is culturally different than one's own, the characteristics that make that school and community unique need

> to be understood. But more than simply understanding, teachers *need to develop* the sensitivity and skills for transferring their knowledge into attitudes and behavior that help them be effective in rural communities. (p. 7)

The above reports suggest, therefore, that prospective rural teachers who have not experienced rural life before will need to develop an understanding of the rural setting. They should secure an awareness of any possible cultural differences that exist between their personal, unique background and that of the rural setting. To be more successful, it is important for the teacher to identify and then adapt to the community values, standards and customs.

Zetler and Lahren (1982) outline the rural teacher education program at Western Montana College. The program is based on three main contexts which are perceived to be different than urban and suburban programs.

1. One of the courses in the program utilizes rural anthropologists to explain to the student teachers various aspects of rural life. It is felt that small communities are comprised of micro-social systems based on localized values and attitudes (p. 5). Zetler and Lahren state that "teachers who can accurately observe, interpret and accommodate to these environments are at an advantage" (p. 5).

2. Once the students have completed the previously described course, they incorporate these skills in a rural field experience. The objective of the field experience is to observe and record characteristics which pertain to rural schools and communities in order to increase the student's awareness of the rural sociology (p. 5).

3. The third phase of the rural teacher program is referred to as the rural education option (p. 5). Prospective teachers decide whether or not to take this option at the end of two years of preparation. The major objective is to match graduates to the specialized needs of different rural settings (p. 5). Zetler and Lahren state, "An elective option in rural education is available which stresses the instructional, school system and community living alterations necessary to cope with rural living" (p. 5).

A study was conducted by Barker and Beckner (1985) to determine the degree to which rural courses are included in teacher education programs of 4-year public colleges and universities in the United States. Questionnaires were sent to 13,613 deans and chairpersons in 473 institutions (p. 5). A return rate of 64.7% was obtained. Some of the findings include:

1. Almost 50% of the respondents felt that teaching in a rural or small school was different than teaching in large schools and that a different type of teacher preparation was necessary (p. 7).

2. Over 60% of the deans and chairpersons suggest that little or no emphasis is placed on practicum courses dealing with rural sociology and over 53% indicate that little or no attention is given to classroom situations requiring the teacher to instruct two or more grade levels (p. 9).

3. In excess of 70% agree that limited attention is placed on student teaching practicums in rural schools and a staggering 87.1% report that course work directly related to rural teaching is also limited in teacher education programs (p. 7).

Considering the above research findings and also that nearly one-third of American children attend rural schools, Barker and Beckner illustrate some of the challenges which are faced by teacher in rural settings as follows:

> Although the basics of instruction are similar in urban, suburban, and rural schools, there are important demands of the rural instructional setting which are different. Teachers are generally more isolated from ongoing developments in their field and from other teachers with similar subject matter expertise. Secondary teachers typically teach a wider range of courses than their urban or suburban counterparts and, of necessity, take on added extra curricular assignments--usually without compensation. Elementary teachers are likely to teach two or more grade levels in the same classroom and do without the assistance of teacher aides. It is not unusual for rural teachers to be called upon to teach a class or subject in which they are not adequately trained and receive little, if any, inservice support. Rural teachers often experience difficulty in locating adequate housing when assigned to a small community and may later have difficulty selling property should they move to another location. In addition, small towns and communities limit privacy, making teachers much more visible in the communities in which they live and work. (p. 2)

Given the previous data and also that more people in the U.S.A. are relocating to rural areas, Barker and Beckner emphasize a future need exists for increased rural teacher education (p. 11). Since more teachers will be accepting positions in these rural settings, it is suggested that the postsecondary institutions consider the rural teacher's needs so that they can address these challenges in a satisfactory manner.

Personal Satisfaction with Rural Settings

Miller (1988, p. 5) states:

> Resources for teacher salaries and staff development are frequently quite limited. If teachers come to a small, rural school *with expectations* predicated upon factors related to urban and suburban schools (often defined by a negotiated master contract) then they are likely to be sorely disillusioned.

Lewis & Edington (1983) conducted a quantitative study in New Mexico that included 262 rural full-time teachers and 300 students. The respondent rate for this study was 88 percent. Some of the conclusions reported from the study are:

1. Teachers that were intent upon staying in a small district were most often motivated to do so because of its proximity to home and family (p. 8). Teachers intent on staying in the rural district had *teaching experience only in rural areas* (p. 3). Few of the teachers who left the district had home or family ties although they usually had teaching experience in rural and urban schools.

2. It was discovered that a relatively larger percentage of the teachers who remained preferred small towns and villages. A relatively larger percentage of the teachers who left the rural area preferred large communities.

3. Almost half of the small district teachers graduated from small high schools. Forty percent (p. 4) of the teachers that left the rural district liked large cities and towns while only eighteen percent of the teachers that remained shared this opinion.

4. Forty percent (p. 4) of the teachers that remained preferred small towns. Only 16% of the teachers that left preferred small towns.

5. Many of the teachers (p. 8) who left the district wanted counseling or administrative positions that were not as abundant in the rural districts.

6. Many of the urban-orientated people (p. 8) were dissatisfied with the rural administration, the instructional programs, and the community conditions.

7. Teachers (p. 8) who left the rural district were most often single.

8. Although teachers in this district averaged 7.5 years of service (p. 5), it was generally concluded that teachers who have been hired in small districts will leave, on the average, after only five years (p. 8). Lewis (1983, p. 7) states that, "The study supported the notion that those who teach in rural areas and intend to stay in one place have roots in the area or in rural life."

Lewis & Edington (1983, p. 9) also made several recommendations in order to reduce teacher turnover in rural areas. They are:

1. Recruit teachers with positive community ties. Interviews should include questions why the person wants to come to the rural district.

2. Recruit teachers who would most likely be able to develop positive ties with the community. Single teachers should be recruited on the basis of whether they can adapt to the conditions in the community.

3. If the district is away from adequate medical services, prospective teachers with small children should be warned about possible hardships.

4. The career goals of the prospective teacher should be considered. Teachers who expect rapid advancement might be considered a *turnover risk*. Teachers who have previous rural experience and are satisfied with rural life would be a lesser risk.

McBeath (1983, p. 4) generalized the following rural teacher characteristics in Alaska:

> In general terms, rural teachers have links to parents and community adults arising from school activities and functions. About one-half have strong community roots and are strongly participatory--even in villages with fewer than 100 residents that are ethnically different from the teacher and other school personnel. The other rural teachers are *not* permanent members of their communities.

Haughey and Murphy (1983, p. 16) state:

> Rural teachers are known to be the most mobile group in the teaching profession. Geographic isolation, lack of privacy, inadequate support services and lack of professional contacts have been identified as factors which account for this phenomenon.

Haughey and Murphy emphasize that a relationship appears to exist between a teacher's level of satisfaction and his or her performance (p. 16). If the teacher receives appropriate support services, opportunities to improve oneself, adequate preparation time, and opportunities to act as a decision-maker in the school, then the teacher's basic work needs become fulfilled (p. 17). This apparently leads to reduced teacher mobility in the rural setting.

Davidson (1986, p. 93) cites several reasons why staff dissatisfaction in rural Yukon is often very high.

> Though it usually happens at the end of the year, I have known people to pack up and leave after a month, after a term or in the middle of the year. Long hours, the winters, isolation, and frustrations over staff housing are frequently cited as reasons. While you can find cases of a rural school's staff remaining stable for a decade or more, it is more likely that there will be a turnover about every two years, sometimes less. By the time the experience needed can be acquired, it is time to do it all over again.

Supporting the notion that personal satisfaction appears to be an important factor associated with rural teaching success, Youngberg (1986, p. 71) indicates that some rural students felt that rural schools were often *dumping grounds* in which to upgrade poor teachers or to provide teaching experience to newer teachers. The students reported that

some teachers were ill-suited to the teaching challenges in rural areas. Further to this, if the teachers were discontent teaching in the respective rural setting, the teachers often told the students that they were here only by circumstance, not by choice (p. 71).

In addition, several of the good teachers usually relocated to urban centres after only a few years in rural settings. Teacher registers showed considerable teacher turnover in the three study settings between 1977 and 1982. For example, Buick Creek in British Columbia showed teacher retention ranging from 80% to only 20% (p. 71).

The above reports, therefore, imply a *fifth important guidepost*. Successful teaching in rural schools might be enhanced if the respective teachers are *satisfied* with the rural setting.

Summary

In this chapter, the literature presented several *guideposts* that seem to be associated with successful rural teachers. They are as follows:

1. The literature suggests that success in the classroom will be enhanced if the teacher possesses certain characteristics to ensure satisfactory *delivery of instruction* to the students. The teacher should be enthusiastic and fair towards the students. In addition, the teachers should enjoy their teaching assignments and be sufficiently well versed to provide a clear expression of ideas. They should possess good classroom management skills. These characteristics will, in turn, increase the chances of student success beyond public school such as postsecondary education or career placements.

2. The literature suggests that a rural teacher might have most success in meeting the diverse needs of rural students if the teacher(s), before accepting a rural position, has some *special rural training and/or previous or existing life experiences* in rural settings. For example, rural experience(s) might include previous childhood experiences in a rural setting. The rural training might be in the form of a rural teacher training practicum.

3. At the same time, the literature suggests that rural teachers might stay longer and have more success in rural areas if the candidates are *personally satisfied* with rural settings, and prefer small communities over larger communities, and considers the rural community *home*. The prospective teacher also accepts that rural community settings do not normally have similar amenities that are found in urban setting.

4. The literature presents an argument that the rural teacher must be flexible and adaptable considering that many teaching loads could be multi-subject and multi-level (split-grades). The literature, therefore, suggests that the teacher would have to be a generalist rather than a specialist. The person, therefore, would be flexible. He or she would also

have to resourceful in the sense that rural schools might not have the quantity or diversity of materials that the urban schools have. The teacher, therefore, would have to "make do" with what is available.

5. In addition to classroom duties, the literature suggests that there is pressure on the teacher to become an integral, stable component of the community. The teacher will participate in, be visible, and not be isolated from the rest of the community. In other words, the person will be a *an involved member of the community*. By *involved member*, I am referring to a person who understands the expectations of the people in the community. The person will help develop and participate in community activities.

In conclusion, the literature review identified *five main guideposts* to successful teaching in rural settings. The guideposts, however, do appear to present a set of relationships that taken together as a unit, might strengthen the respective teacher's qualifications and thus lead to a more successful teaching experience in rural settings. The importance of these relationships is enhanced further in the following thematic framework.

Thematic Framework

The related literature section has been used to develop a *thematic framework* which is presented in tabular form.

The Guideposts

The literature review suggests that each of the following guideposts, presented in Table 1, are important to the success of a teacher. I feel that the naturalistic inquiry tradition allows me the best opportunity to better understand each one of the guideposts. If the field research shows that the following guideposts, taken together, are considered important to rural communities, then a better understanding of the process(es) to achieve success and acceptance for senior high teacher in rural settings, should result.

Table 1

Guideposts for the Investigation of Rural Teacher Success and Acceptance

Guidepost	Important Characteristics
Delivery of Instruction	Student achievement increases with teacher success in the classroom. Student achievement in rural areas has a relationship to urban centres in that some rural students will pursue training in urban settings.
Flexibility and Resourcefulness	Rural teachers need to adapt to several different types of classroom situations. Multigrade classrooms and subject areas are a reality. Rural teachers are generalists. Rural teachers must be innovative because of a reduced quantity and variety of resources.
The Teacher as an Involved Member of the Community	The teacher's role in rural communities is not restricted only to the school walls. There is ample opportunity for rural teachers to become involved in community affairs and events. Rural communities appear to have certain expectations of their teachers. Rural teacher success might be related to teacher involvement in the community.
Personal Experience with Rural Settings	Rural teacher success might be somewhat related to prior exposure to rural settings. Prior exposure might include rural training or being from a rural setting.

(table continues)

Guidepost	Important Characteristics
Personal Satisfaction with Rural Settings	A possible relationship exists between rural teacher success and teacher preference for rural settings. People relationships are normally easier to develop in rural settings because of their small size and sometimes isolated geographical location. Amenities in rural settings are usually not as abundant as in urban centres.

Chapter 3
Plan For The Research

The purpose of this study was to reveal what is important to senior high teachers and grade 12 students which contributes to the success and acceptance of teachers working in a particular rural school jurisdiction, and to suggest interpretations of the findings. A multi-stage plan for the study has been adopted. In this chapter, I did the following:

1. First, a description of the research tradition is provided. A brief explanation of the interpretive paradigm is provided. The sources of data, namely students and teachers, are identified. The procedures for the selection of the interviewees and the *criteria used for selection* are outlined. A description of the County of Barrhead #11 and the respective study settings is provided. The research instrument itself, namely the *interview* , is introduced to the reader.

2. Next, the data collection section provides a rationale for the use of the interview as this study's instrument. In addition, there is an overview to explain how trustworthiness will be ensured for the field data. Various ethical considerations are outlined.

3. The chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis procedures used for the study.

The Research Tradition

This research was conducted as an interpretive study on the topic of success of senior high school rural teachers. By *interpretive study,* I mean research that had as its outcome a better understanding of the research question. It was not intended as a means to state generalizations or to implement change. The interpretive paradigm allowed me the opportunity to utilize an emerging design process. Additional interviews were necessary in order to obtain more data to clarify the research issues. Because I was in close contact with the participants, I had opportunities to use probing techniques to search for the *real meanings*.

The design of the study was guided by the problem statement with an emphasis on the following: What is important to senior high teachers and grade 12 students which contributes to the success and acceptance of rural senior high school teachers?

Defining the Study Setting

Rural, for this study context, is defined as Alberta communities encompassing no more that 4,000 people. The senior high schools are located at least 80 kilometres from any major urban centre of 20,000 people or more.

General Characteristics of the County of Barrhead #11

The two school settings, Lorne Jenken High School and Fort Assiniboine school, are located in the County of Barrhead and are displayed in Figure 1. The County has a population of approximately 23,000 and has an agricultural, oil, and forestry base to its economy. There are several ethnic groups, including German, Ukranian, British, and Dutch, within the County. The populations are generally *second and third generation*. There appears to be a strong emphasis on the family unit. The people generally believe in *traditional values*. For example, an elementary school survey conducted in Barrhead in December, 1988 showed that over thirty-eight percent of the families in this county felt that *religious conviction* was the most important value. There appears to be limited transiency within the population.

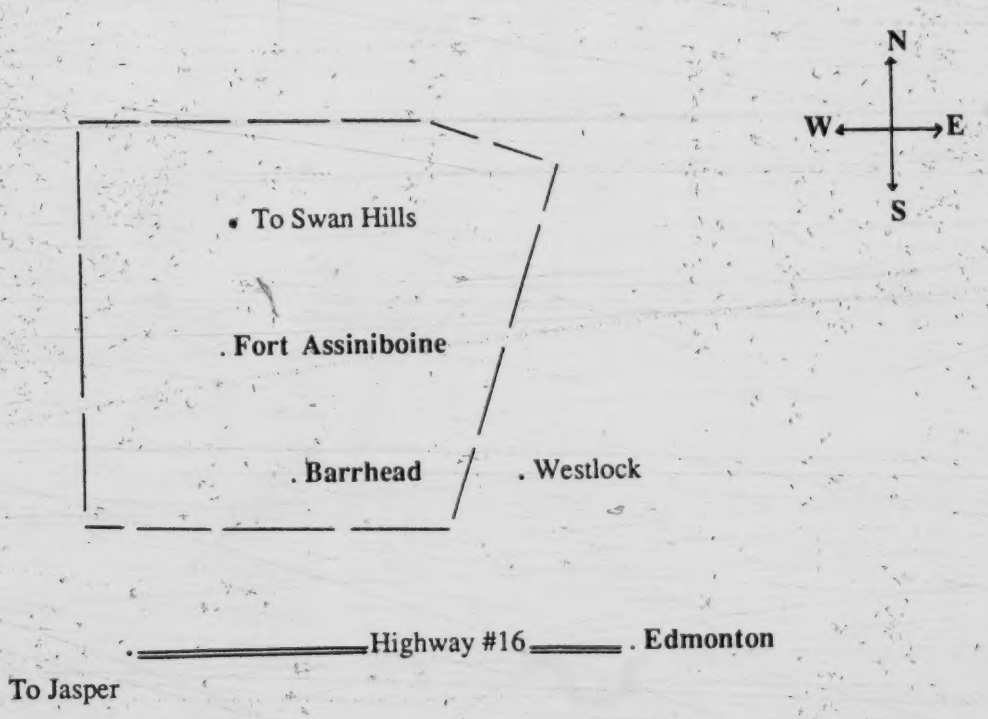

Figure 1. Orientation Map of the Study Settings Enclosed Within the County of Barrhead #11

Description of the Study Settings

A description of Lorne Jenkin High School and Fort Assiniboine school is as follows:

Lorne Jenkin High School

Lorne Jenkin High School is located in the town of Barrhead which is located approximately 100 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, Alberta. The school has academic and vocational wings with an approximate senior high school population of 600 students and thirty teachers.

Barrhead has a population of approximately 4,000 people. Several different ethnic groups such as German, Dutch, Ukrainian, and British make up the majority of the population. The town's economy has mainly an agricultural base. The Alberta Correspondence School is also located in Barrhead.

Fort Assiniboine School

Fort Assiniboine School is located in the town of Fort Assiniboine which is located approximately 150 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, Alberta. The school has a senior high population of approximately fifty students and five teachers with no vocational wing.

Fort Assiniboine has a town population of approximately 300 people. It is primarily an agricultural and forestry community but is somewhat affected by the nearby oil industry base at Swan Hills, 60 kilometres north of Fort Assiniboine. The main ethnic groups are German and British.

Selection of the Interviewees

The selection procedure was purposive; it provided an opportunity to interview grade twelve students and senior high teachers from rural areas so that a better understanding of the successful rural teacher was achieved. I chose grade twelve students because I believe that based on their twelve years of experience in schools, they are able to identify positive aspects that would lead to teaching success in rural settings.

This study, therefore, gathered information from two different stakeholder groups in education, namely the students and teachers. I initiated the process by interviewing the school principals and/or vice-principals in order to obtain a recommended list of grade twelve students and senior high teachers. From *Lorne Jenken School* I chose five students from a list of ten recommended grade twelve students. In reference to *Fort*

Assiniboine school, I chose one student from a suggested list of five students. A total of six students were interviewed.

In addition to the student perceptions of a successful rural teacher, teachers were given the opportunity to express their views. I chose five of the ten suggested teachers from Lorne Jenkin, and two of three suggested teachers from Fort Assiniboine. The list of teachers was provided by the school administrations.

A total of thirteen student/teacher interviews, therefore, was conducted. I felt that the participants provided ample information to generate a satisfactory explanation and understanding of the research topic.

It was noted, however, that although the two selected schools within the County are perceived as different by various teachers within the County, it was assumed that the student participants from both schools perceived teacher success in similar ways. This was the case. However, the inquirer discovered divergent viewpoints regarding the degree of generalist teaching between the two schools. In order to support the views of the Fort Assiniboine teacher participant, an additional interview was necessary. This was adequate as similar viewpoints emerged from both Fort Assiniboine teachers. An emergent process, therefore, was utilized for this study.

Criteria for Selection. It was assumed that the school administrations would know the students very well. It was believed, therefore, that they would be able to suggest *students*, based on reputation, that would be able to provide information on the topic based on maturity, sensitivity, and good judgement. *Teachers* were selected on the following basis: (a) that they have at least 3 to 5 years of teaching experience; (b) that the teachers are recognized as insightful analysts, and thus have insights into successful rural teaching; (c) that some of the teachers are originally from the Barrhead area and that some are from outside the county. In order to obtain a suitable cross-section of teachers, it was preferable that some of the teachers would originally be from urban settings. This was the case.

The Study Instrument

I believed that the most suitable instrument for this study is the interview. The research question led to a wide diversity of interpretations of success as it related to instruction. In order that a complete picture of my research question was obtained, clarification of certain viewpoints by the participants was necessary and significant to the overall quality of the data. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 155) state:

> The ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilizing their value and belief frameworks, is virtually impossible without face-to-face and verbal interaction with them. Getting better data, more data, and data at less cost often involves being on site. Interviewing in itself should be thought of as an almost indispensable tool in the tactics of the naturalistic inquirer."

Guba and Lincoln suggest that "the naturalistic inquirer is constantly searching for that which is unique, atypical, different, idiographic, and individualistic" (p. 129). The interview provided the naturalistic inquirer with opportunities to observe *unspoken or silent clues* that were expressed by the interviewees. For example, body language and gestures provided additional data to the inquirer which would not be available in other types of investigative techniques such as the questionnaire. The interview, therefore, enabled the naturalistic inquirer to interact with the participants in the context of the specific situation. The above techniques, therefore, led to a better understanding of the research question.

Data Collection

Data collection using interviews were conducted April of 1989. Most of the data collection occurred during April and May of 1989. Students and teachers were the research groups. The interviews were intended to obtain and clarify information that might not be addressed in a questionnaire. The face-to-face interaction provided more opportunities for access to interviewee feelings, thoughts, and intentions. The researcher believed that since the data for this study were provided by two different research groups, with different roles and life experiences, that the teachers and students should, therefore, be presented with a different set of interview questions. The questions were based on the same issues but were *worded* to the level and understanding of the particular target group. I used the general interview guide technique for this study. Patton (1980, p. 205) summarizes the general interview guide technique as providing a framework "within which participants can express their own understandings in their terms." The general interview guide technique contained features that I considered appropriate for this study. For example, a list of questions was constructed prior to the interviews to ensure that the same material would be covered in each interview. This ensured a certain amount of freedom for the participants to explore areas of particular interest to both the interviewee and inquirer. The interviews were semi-structured. The funnel approach (broad questions to specific) was utilized. Open-ended questions were used to generate discussion. Accessory questions helped to guide the interviewee to the research question(s).

It was expected that each interview would last approximately forty minutes. This was the case except for two or three of the interviews which lasted approximately fifty to sixty minutes. The time and location for the interviews was dependent upon the mutual agreement between the interviewee and inquirer. It was agreed the interviews would be conducted at the respective school sites, in a room designated by the principal. Any follow-up interviews were arranged in a similar manner. I followed the process used by Rowley (1988). She reported that once the initial interviews were carried out, the transcripts were then returned to each interviewee in order to permit clarification of specific quotations and preliminary interpretations (p. 30). The follow-up interviews, therefore, provide an opportunity for the inquirer to discuss and clarify any uncertain data about which the researcher wants clarification which is highlighted in the transcripts (p. 30).

Further, a tentative list of categories with accompanying statements were given to all members of each target group. *Categories* are important descriptive ideas emerging from the interview participants, namely grade 12 students and rural senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead #11.

The participants were requested to read over their documents, make additional written comments, and decide whether or not the data provided an accurate picture of the successful and accepted rural teacher in the County of Barrhead #11. The documents were placed inside envelopes provided to the participants, and then sealed. The researcher picked up the envelopes from the participants at the respective school sites. This procedure also enabled the participants to discuss with me, the tentative findings. It also provided the researcher with additional opportunities for clarification of data.

Tentative themes were discussed at the school site or through telephone conversations. *Themes* are broad-based issues which surfaced from the participant data. These follow-up interviews comprised my *member checks*. Occasional telephone conversations with some participants were necessary to clarify particular pieces of information.

Trustworthiness of Data

Trustworthiness of data is a key issue for any inquirer working in the interpretive paradigm. Sometimes there are discrepancies between what the interviewees said to the inquirer and what they actually mean. It is, therefore, vital that the inquirer ensure that the responses are sufficiently accurate that readers correctly interpret the findings.

Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 103) state:

> For naturalistic inquiry, meeting *tests of rigor* is a requisite for establishing trust in the outcome of the inquiry. The question to be confronted is simple: "What arguments might the naturalistic inquirer use to persuade a methodologically sophisicated peer of the trustworthiness of the information provided and the interpretations drawn from it."

Guba and Lincoln report *four aspects of rigor* to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative data. They are:

1. In establishing the truth value of the data, the naturalistic inquirer is concerned with testing the *credibility* of the findings and interpretations with the sources of data (p. 105). In order that credibility or *believability* be achieved in this study, the following procedure was established.

(a) It was necessary to clarify certain responses during the interviews so that the intended meanings were obtained. Further to this, *member checks* with participants of each research group were utilized in order to obtain the true meaning (p. 105)

(b) The inquirer encouraged the interviewees to communicate freely. Grabstas (1988) suggests that "occasional paraphrasing of interviewee responses during and after the interview is necessary for clarification purposes and perception checks" (p. 52).

(c) The inquirer made an effort to prevent personal bias by being conscious of this possibility and making the necessary adjustments. For example, the inquirer should be prepared to remain silent for a period of time rather than *leading the interviewee on.*

(d) The recoding of the data, continual checking for consistency of the data, cross-checking of inferences, and continual assessment of subject credibility were monitored (p. 106).

This study employed *tape recordings, written transcripts and member checks, and a diary* as its criteria to ensure data credibility.

2. *Fittingness* refers to the application or transfer of this data to other studies in different contexts. Guba and Lincoln (1981) state:

> Thick description involves literal description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, the nature of the community in which it is located But thick description also involves *interpreting the meaning* of such demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and motives. (p. 119)

Guba and Lincoln (1981), when making reference to the above statement, state, "And indeed, knowledge of the latter kind is essential if we are to transfer an innovation from one community to another. Only then can we assess the degree of fittingness that actually exists" (p. 119). It appears evident that fittingness is somewhat of an extension of credibility. In order to ensure maximum fittingness, the findings were recorded as accurately as possible and in context with the specific situation(s) *for this study*.

3. The third test of rigor for interpretive data is the opportunity to *audit* the findings. People's opinions about certain things can and do change over time. The data should be trackable so any changes in interviewee opinions can be determined. Guba and Lincoln (1981) state that:

> A naturalistic evaluation can be audited by a second investigator or team. The second team could not be expected to reproduce the study. . . .The team could, however, review each decision and the consequent actions, verifying that substantively and methodologically sound options were chosen. (p. 122)

It is possible that in future years, the interviewees might change their opinions about certain issues. In order to ensure a satisfactory audit, an *audit trail* was maintained. The nature of the decisions, the data upon which it was based, and the reasoning that entered into the interpretations of the data made up the audit trail (Guba and Lincoln, p. 122). For example, in addition to the audiotapes and written copies being available, the *original* transcripts were *stored* on computer disk. An audit trail serves as an opportunity to refer to the above data sources in order to verify the reasoning that led to the interpretations. If changes are necessary, then the changes can be made. The audit trail, therefore, makes the data *trackable*.

4. The final test of rigor is neutrality or *confirmability*. Since the research instrument for this study is the interview, the *inquirer* is also a direct participant in the interview process. Guba and Lincoln state:

> But to imagine that an evaluator, by an act of will or by virtue of clever methodology, can rid himself of subjectivity is the worst kind of fantasy. No human being can be objective in that sense. The requirement that information be confirmable rids the inquirer of this impossible constraint; it simply asks that the inquirer report his data in such a way that it can be confirmed from other sources if necessary. (p. 126)

It is essential that personal biases of the inquirer are minimized. In order to maximize the confirmability for this study, the inquirer makes reference to the credibility criteria that was previously outlined. It is suggested that these methods of establishing credibility should also establish the confirmability of the data.

Ethical Considerations

The collection of data for this study requires a sincere effort on behalf of the researcher to develop 'trust' between the participants.

1. In order that the identity of the participants remained anonymous, a coding procedure such as numerals instead of names was used. In addition, their home locations also remained anonymous. The researcher referred to the participants as "interviewees, inquirees, or participants". A numeral instead of the respective participant's name was utilized when the interviews were being transcribed.

2. The information received from the participants remained totally confidential to the researcher and participants--the data obtained from the diary notes and audiotapes were destroyed upon the completion of the thesis.

3. The interviewees had opportunities to stop the interview at any time. The initial contact letter, telephone conversations, and refusal to be taped (audio) during the interviews all signalled opportunities for opting out. The participants also had opportunities to confirm, reject, or change their input into the study once the interview transcript was provided to me.

4. The initial contact with the participants provided an additional opportunity for them to accept or reject the opportunity to participate. Each participant was asked to sign a letter of consent prior to their participation in the study. The letter re-stated the nature and purpose of the study. The letter of consent and the covering letter explaining the purpose of the study, therefore, comprised the package. No interviews were conducted until informed consent was obtained.

Since the study involved grade 12 students from Barrhead, Alberta and Fort Assiniboine, Alberta, the respective letters of consent were signed by their parent(s) or guardian(s). This confirmed parental/guardian permission for the students to participate in the study.

5. Each participant had opportunities to review and verify his or her statements on the interview transcript(s). The interviewees were encouraged to comment on the credibility of the categories and themes which emerged from the analysis of the interviews. A written list of tentative categories including an explanation of each was provided to each participant. Tentative themes were discussed at the school site or over the telephone.

Data Analysis

This was an on-going and emergent process. After the student and teacher interviewees were selected, a pre-interview was conducted at the respective schools in order to give each of the interviewees an opportunity to inquire about the study, to become acquainted with the researcher, and to opt out of the study. From this point, a personal file for each participant was prepared which consisted of complete names, personal phone numbers and addresses, and the ensuing interview transcripts. The accumulation and purpose of the file data for each participant was to answer the research question(s).

The categories and themes were identified from the interview transcripts as follows:

1. The students and teachers were separated into distinct research groups.

2. For each research group, each interview guide section was color-coded. Cutting and pasting was required in order to assimilate the color-coded data into common piles.

3. Each research group was analyzed separately.

4. The transcripts and tapes were reviewed by the researcher on several occasions. Using a computer and the interview tapes, common descriptor words were identified for each interview section.

5. Paragraphs of information were analyzed in order to identify similar characteristics, patterns, meanings, or ideas.

6. The main categories for each research group were identified.

7. The transcripts and initial categories were given to the students and teachers in order to verify their comments and also the researcher's accuracy in interpreting these comments. They had opportunities to add, delete, or change certain words in their transcripts and also to agree or disagree with the tentative statement of categories. These additional interviews, referred to as member checks, also provided the student and teacher participants with opportunities to answer additional questions from the researcher or to elaborate further on specific issues related to successful rural teaching. There was some overlap of data within the various categories.

8. Finally, several tentative themes were identified. The credibility of the themes was discussed with each participant at the respective school sites or via telephone conversations.

Summary

This chapter reviews the methodology for this study. The purpose of the study was to reveal what senior high teachers and grade 12 students in the County of Barrhead consider important for teacher success and acceptance in this rural setting.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to address the research question. Member checks were utilized to ensure that the interpretations of the data were credible. The data obtained from the study represented the views of students and teachers in reference to rural teacher success and acceptance.

The student and teacher data are categorized in terms of the research question. This information is presented in this form in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. Themes follow in Chapter 6. Finally, an overall summary report, various personal reflections, and an implications section completes this thesis in Chapter 7.

Chapter 4
What The Students Said!

Introduction

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the interview data gathered from five grade 12 students from Lorne Jenkin Senior High in Barrhead, Alberta and one grade 12 student from Fort Assiniboine High School in Fort Assiniboine, Alberta.

Some Initial Findings

There is a range of academic potential among the participants. All of the students were born and raised in rural areas but not necessarily in Barrhead or Fort Assiniboine. All six participants suggested the *closeness* of the school people makes life very exciting in the two settings. They emphasized it is a combination of knowing your student colleagues well for many years, and the teachers, which makes school friendly, interesting and fun. Further, there is a personal commitment to involvement in sports or other school activities which makes the closeness and exciting school atmosphere a reality. Three students shared personal experiences in which they felt the teacher has helped make school life exciting for them:

> I am involved in the Grad Council and that is pretty exciting in itself especially with it being one month away now. . . . That is a really big thing in our school . . . . I am also very close to a lot of the teachers. I'd say that they're more so my friends than my teachers so I think that is exciting. In Barrhead, the teachers aren't really so much teachers, they are more your friends. . . . It makes learning a lot more exciting, that's for sure.

> Take English for example. We do a lot of creative things; we just finished studying a novel and we had to do a creative assignment. A friend and I did a drama presentation on it. I like drama so that made it fun for me. Classes are really open.

> It is exciting because everyone is trying to help you work to the fullest of your potential. I think that is exciting because high school is where you have to make decisions for what you are going to do with yourself after school. I think all of the teachers try their best to help you out with that.

The analysis is presented in such a way as to address the following research question:

What is important to grade 12 students which contributes to the success and acceptance of rural senior high teachers?

The findings point to several different perceptions regarding the successful rural teacher. For example, the teacher's values and beliefs, education and lifestyle, and the community expectations appear to reflect on teaching success and acceptance in rural settings.

The Major Categories

It was discovered that similar categories emerged from both school settings. No major differences occurred. The major categories which emerged from the grade 12 student data from Fort Assiniboine and Lorne Jenken High Schools and which appear to be related to success and acceptance in rural teaching are:

Teacher Orientation to Rural Students

I asked the participants, "How important is it to you as a student that the senior high teachers in this school are also from rural areas?" Most students believe that once a teacher accepts a position in a rural setting (from any location), that teacher will be accepted as long as he or she is a good teacher. In the words of one participant, "I don't really think it makes a difference--a good teacher is a good teacher no matter where they are from." But the adjustment to rural life is made easier if teachers willingly learn about, understand and accept the rural lifestyle of the students for the way it is. In addition, the teacher-student relationship becomes more positive when a give-and-take attitude prevails. As one participant commented:

> It depends on his personality . . . one teacher who came out here from the city, I had fun with him and he was nice to me. He bugged me about farming and I bugged him about his hairdo. You just have fun with each other and so on. If they understand you and you understand them, it is no big deal. But if they have a whole different concept of life than you do, it is kind of hard to get along.

In contrast, one interviewee felt that teachers from rural settings might be able to accomplish this better. She reported, "Maybe teachers from rural areas would understand

the feelings some rural students have about being deprived." However, one participant suggested that teachers from urban settings might benefit rural students in other ways.

> Actually, I think it is a learning experience for the students if the teacher is not from a rural area . . . it is an added bonus to the students because they get a different wavelength of thinking. For most students in rural areas, the city is still glorified, and to find someone who comes from the city and has always grown up the the city, the students get viewpoints about how the city is viewed and, therefore, you broaden your scale.

Only one of the students strongly believed that new teachers to this County should originally be from rural settings. This student feels that teachers from rural backgrounds are better equipped to understand the particular values and needs of rural students. Teachers with rural values will be able to communicate more openly with rural students. To provide clarification of this viewpoint, this participant shared the following statement:

> I think it makes a difference in their attitude towards you as an individual . . . . People that have grown up also in a rural area have grown up with the same sets of values. . . . I am sure that they can communicate better with you than those who have grown up in the city. I think teaching is different from the city to the rural areas. They bring out their teaching methods and the things that they have been taught.

During the interview, I asked this student to expand further on what she meant by *communicating better* and how it affects the relationships between rural teachers and rural students. The student's reply was:

> They are more open to ideas and suggestions that the student might have, whereas the city person might have their own sets of ideas and views on everything. They are perhaps not as eager to accept new ideas that might even be better than their own, whereas rural teachers like the ones here, are always willing to accept the view of the student even if it is different from their own.

To reduce the amount of adjustment necessary when relocating to rural settings, one participant suggests that prospective teachers from urban settings might visit rural areas and schools, or student-teach in a rural school in order to learn more about the rural values. He stated, "If they are in college or university and they are taking their courses on teaching, maybe they could ask to go to a rural school and help a rural teacher." The initiative, according to this student, is with the teacher to learn as much about rural life as possible. This student further elaborated as follows:

> If they are from a city, go to a small town on a Saturday . . . take a drive to Barrhead, Westlock or Mayerthorpe . . . see what it is like around the country, drive through it. To me it would be a relaxing day. . . . Walk into a school on a day or the weekend of a tournament. Listen to the student conversations . . . see what they are like.

All of the students agreed that incoming teachers must be aware of, and open-minded to, the rural culture in order to fit-in and be accepted by rural students. To illustrate this point of view, several students from Lorne Jenken High School reported current teachers commuting from larger centres willingly accept the rural way of life during regular school hours. In essence, they are rural people with rural values during the day and urban people with urban values at night. The students perceive these teachers as making honest efforts to understand rural values. As a result, the teachers gain more acceptance.

Understanding Situations That Rural Students Face

Four of six students reported that good rural teachers try to become personally acquainted with as many students as possible. The teachers make efforts to talk with the students in and out of school. This assists the teachers in learning as much as possible about the student's background. If the teacher knows where the student is *coming from*, it then becomes easier for the teacher to diagnose and accommodate the specific needs or responsibilities of these students. For example, most of the participants emphasized rural teachers need to be aware that the majority of students in Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine come from farming backgrounds. Since agriculture is important to the local economies of both communities, the teacher willingly accepts that these students might have obligations to meet on the farm, especially during harvesting.

One student from Lorne Jenken High School indicated that the school handbook states provisions made for such circumstances. If homework is assigned but cannot be completed due to farming obligations, teachers willingly help students catch-up, even if it means assisting these students at noon hour or before school hours. One participant reported how the school makes allowance for his farming obligations:

> Dad cannot do a field by himself, he needs someone to drive the grain truck or the combine or the swather and so when it comes to harvest time, we have to be at home to help. That is one thing I like about our school. They understand and they let you do it. If the teacher understands you, gives you a break and lets you hand in assignments the next day, the kid will learn to like him and work for him. You understand the teacher and you try to work out everything together.

A second student provided the following statement regarding absenteeism from school, also for the purpose of harvesting:

> Sometimes they cannot spend as much time on their studies because if they are on a farm and it is a big operation . . . they have to give a hand. . . . Teachers do understand around here since it is a farming community more or less. A lot of the students do miss school for the purpose of combining. . . . The teachers understand and they give them extra help on whatever they missed. . . . They try to help make up part of the lesson that the student has missed.

Not all participants believed that rural teachers should provide farm children with special privileges. Two of these students currently live on farms; one lives around Barrhead and the other outside of Fort Assiniboine. The student from Fort Assiniboine reported, "We are from farms and we have tractor work to do but I don't think that changes a teacher's teaching in any way--if you have homework, you have homework."

Diverse Communication Skills

Four of the six students utilized descriptive terms such as relaxed, free, close, friendly, and slower-paced to describe their lifestyles. Everyone knows, understands, and tries to get along with each other. One student emphasized that country people usually enjoy meeting others, and this requires good communication skills. The same student indicated that good communication skills were continually emphasized as she was growing up. In her words, "Country people are usually willing to accept different ideas and people as they are."

Because of the closeness of rural people to each other, teachers will find excellent opportunities to meet several different types of community groups such as farmers, oil and lumber employees, and local merchants. The students advised that rural teachers should possess diverse communication skills in order to successfully understand and get along with these different groups. One Barrhead student suggested the following as being beneficial to the understanding and awareness of the expectations placed on rural teachers:

> Friendliness . . . they definitely have to be friendly, very compatible I guess is the word. You have to be able to get along with people especially in the Barrhead community . . . definitely people here have arranged themselves in little groups. I see that . . . being at work, you see so many people a day and so many groups of people, they're so different. . . . A lot of them don't communicate at all. I think you should be flexible and be able to communicate with people. I think that's important.

She continued by saying:

> I have always been taught . . . to be the very best person that you can be, but it's important to me to always get along with people. I always make an extra effort to get along. . . . I am sure that a teacher can do the job better when you are fairly well acquainted with everyone in the community. I am sure that you can be much more successful in an atmosphere where you are relaxed, you know the other people, and maybe you know their expectations of you and that would be important because if you don't know what you're supposed to be doing, you might be making a lot of people unhappy.

One Lorne Jenken student was asked a question regarding the importance of teachers making efforts to get to know the people of the community. The person felt that a teacher who refuses or hesitates to meet people will soon find that the locals will also hesitate to accept that teacher. The comment was stated as follows:

> Maybe society here in Barrhead will think that the teachers are high on themselves. The parents will also start telling the kids that the teachers are high on themselves, and not to like that teacher. As a result, the kids won't like him. But if a teacher goes out and says, "Hi" and he is nice to all of the people, you don't have to be a politician about it, just be nice. I think that will work for a teacher.

Most of the participants feel that in order to meet students, a teacher's range of knowledge can be a valuable tool. For example, one Barrhead student suggested that a teacher with some sports knowledge is in a better position to communicate and thus develop a rapport with many of the students. In support of this belief, one student offered some advice to new teachers:

> I would probably say to become known in sports first. That is a big thing in Barrhead. Get known in the sports arena and then try to relate this to the students. Start talking to them generally and then get more specific as you get to know them better.

In summation, most of the students suggested that a diverse range of communication skills would be an asset to rural teachers in this County. Since both study settings are smaller communities in size, the teachers will have excellent opportunities to meet many different groups of people. Farmers, oil employees, lumber employees, local merchants, teachers and students represent a sampling of the local groups which call the County of Barrhead home! If the teacher has the ability to talk openly and comfortably with these people, then the teacher should be able to develop a better understanding of the rural expectations placed upon him or her by these different groups.

Teacher Satisfaction with Rural Settings

According to the participants, there are several reasons why their teachers appear to be personally satisfied in this County. Some of the students reported rural teachers should recognize that rural settings are close knit and that this relaxed, friendly atmosphere diffuses into the school setting. They suggested that if the teachers are relaxed and happy living in rural areas, then the overall school atmosphere appears to be more relaxed. Most of the participants felt that the teachers in Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine enjoy the many opportunities to interact personally with students.

One Barrhead student made reference to the smaller classes and the opportunities for getting to know students personally. This is something that both the students and teachers enjoy. She utilized her math class as an example by stating, "I am thinking of my math class, there are 10 of us--it is great because that means that each student has 8 minutes with the teacher and that is great."

Another participant from Fort Assiniboine made reference to having open classroom discussions as a possible enhancer of satisfaction for rural senior high teachers. She shared one example, "We come into class and talk about what we did on the weekend or the fight we had with our parents." When discussing the results of close teacher-student relationships, a second interviewee explained, "It shows they are just like us, we can relate to them and they can relate to us." Another participant remarked about how easy the students are able to relate to the teachers in the hallways of a senior high school in this County:

> At noon hour, you see students talking to the teachers all the time and they are having fun with them. I remember I was in the city just once. I walked through a school. . . . The teachers were walking around and it seemed like all of the students were walking around them, and trying to stay away from them. But here, everybody has fun. Everybody talks to your teachers, it's a pretty homey kind of thing.

Five of the six students suggested personal satisfaction is enhanced when teachers feel that they are doing good jobs in their classrooms! One student remarked:

> I was talking to one of my teachers and he was saying that when a student comes up to you and says, "Thank-you", that just means so much. Just that one thank-you means so much. . . . He was really happy about that. Or even to hear a parent say after their child has gone on to further education . . . that you really had a lot to do with our child's success and he said that meant a lot. I think it makes them happy to see students really enthusiastic about their courses.

A second student shared similar views with the following statement:

> I think they find it quite rewarding when they know you as an individual and they see the accomplishments that you have made. Most of the teachers enjoy teaching. To them, their course is so important that they pour everything they have into it. I am sure that makes them happy, especially when there is a pleasant outcome at the end of the year.

Only two students mentioned limited shopping facilities and social life as being possible disadvantages of rural life for themselves and possibly for some teachers. If a teacher is coming from an urban environment, it is possible that some initial adjustments might be necessary. One Barrhead student discussed several major differences that urban teachers could face upon their arrival in this rural setting. The student also explained how some of these limitations might be overcome for the teachers in order that their personal satisfaction is promoted. She commented:

> He will have to get used to the lack of population. First of all, he will find that there is no rush hour in Barrhead and that there are not as many facilities available for entertainment nor for shopping. You do have to drive an hour to the city if you really want to go shopping.

The rural closeness, friendliness and feelings of personal security go beyond the school. Most students feel that new teachers will enjoy teaching in the rural settings if they develop friendships as soon as possible. They suggested that becoming involved in school and community activities helps the teacher become known to the students as well as to other community people. This satisfaction is enhanced when the teacher personally enjoys meeting people. According to the students, this also leads to greater acceptance within the school and community as the teacher is perceived as displaying enthusiasm for the rural lifestyle. An interesting comment from one participant was described as follows:

> For those teachers that are married and have children, it is an added bonus to live within a rural community simply because of the lack of . . . locking your doors isn't a big deal, and it's a much more relaxed atmosphere. . . . You can always go outside or send out your children, you don't have to worry about it. For those teachers that are single, it's a community where once you know everybody, once you know people . . . so you're always surrounded by a group of friends and there's always activities for you to do as a group.

A second participant also feels that rural teachers find personal satisfaction when they willingly develop friendships and want to become involved citizens. She stated:

> The new teachers that do come are very charismatic in the sense that they are willing to become participatory in events as well as being very open individuals,

> there's no problem meeting people . . . they enjoy the people spectrum. I think for most of them, the first step was to get involved within the school with their colleagues. They became friends with those teachers and that is where they began to assimilate into the community. Instead of having to assimilate from the community into the school, they worked it out the other way.

I asked this student whether she felt that new teachers must come to accept a reduced level of anonymity before they can enjoy living in a rural community such as Barrhead. Her reply was:

> It can be as long as you are readily interested in making friends and assimilating into the community. But if you tend to be more of an outcast or prefer to be by yourself, then the closeness of the community can be stifling.

Three of the interviewees also talked about the countryside as being satisfying to rural teachers. One student suggested that the calmness, nice scenery and country air is attractive to rural teachers living in this County. As she explained, "I think it is a nice looking place."

Commitment to Immediate and Long-term Student Success

Four of the six students suggested that the main role of a teacher is teaching. The students suggested that since most classes in rural settings are smaller in size, the teachers should be willing to spend more time with each student in order to enhance their immediate and long-term success. The quality of performance by the teacher is considered very important. One student reported that good teachers are willing to work beyond 4:00 p.m. The teacher is willing to help any student at noon, before or after school with any course difficulties. When discussing the diversity of students in rural classrooms, one student participant made it clear that rural senior high teachers have responsibilities to all kinds of students:

> Diversity in that there is no discrimination between those students that are smart and those that are not. Diversity in the notion that there is a lot of group classes within the school and that there is no distinguishing between those groups. For most teachers, it comes to the point where a student is a student and the teacher is willing to put in as much time as necessary to help them.

Some students will be satisfied to obtain high school credits and then remain working on the farm, while others will want to venture into the city for additional schooling or perhaps careers. The rural teacher, therefore, needs to be aware of each student's potential and future aspirations. A desire to assist each student become successful was viewed as a positive quality of that teacher. When asked a question about the teacher's ability to

diagnose students' strengths, one participant related a personal experience centering on possible career options:

> When I first went there, we talked mostly about the potential that I had and then mark wise, we talked about that a little bit . . . we talked mostly about the options that I had . . . they direct you to books or pamphlets, sometimes they even give you them.

The participants strongly emphasized that good rural senior high teachers are those that try to assist students in recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses. Once the teacher has made this diagnosis, then as one student stated:

> I think if they take a great interest in what your interests are and they try to know you as a person and the things that you enjoy or don't enjoy or what you excel in or have weaknesses in, that they would try to put a little extra effort in to give you a hand.

The students also reported that most rural classes have a wide spectrum of student groups. Because these students come from different backgrounds and possess different expectations for their schooling, the successful rural teacher is open-minded, sufficiently flexible, and secure enough in the classroom to listen to a wide variety of viewpoints. The result is a more positive learning environment for *all* students. To support this idea, one participant suggested the following:

> For them, I think they have to learn to accept students as they are. There is such a variety of students. . . . That occurs in every school but I think in this one, you go from the bottom end of the spectrum in society all the way to the top. I mean, you've got delinquents and you have your goody goodies and they have to learn that these people will be mixed in the classes and they have to accommodate for both of those types of students and treat them as equally as they possibly can.

Therefore, the participants believe that rural teachers should be persons who are committed to academic success for their students. This is achieved easier if the teachers become aware of the student's background. One participant stated, "They have known you since you were little, like through your parents--they know what your potentials are and they make you strive for them." The teachers sincerely care for, accept, and treat all students equally in the classroom even if discrepancies in ability become evident. The best interests of each student are very important to these teachers. They are willing to spend extra time with any students who need help.

Flexibility in Teaching Strategies

Five of the six students suggested that rural teachers should instruct all students in the class rather than only the top portion of the class. Rural classes often consist of students from varying backgrounds and educational aspirations. The participants advised that successful rural teachers utilize different teaching strategies to reach *all* of the students. One student described such a teacher as an honest person who tries to cultivate the academic potential of each student. To this person, an honest teacher is one who "is available to all students who need extra help." She emphasized that rural teachers should not forget about the students who find school more difficult:

> I think the majority of teachers tend to teach more to the upper percent of the class, that is what I have seen. They forget about those people . . . but help those people who are doing so well. They want them to achieve their best. They sometimes forget about the few that aren't achieving quite as high.

Most of the participants suggested that a variety of teaching methods makes the classes more interesting and fun for everyone. In this way, the teacher is communicating with all the students on their own levels. To support this idea, one student spoke as follows:

> I think that they have to be willing to know where the student wishes to go, why the student is in school, and how the student views the importance of school because if you know what the student hopes to get out of school, I think they can plan more towards where the course should be going and how to get the students interested. If you have a class that is far more interested in everyday, practical activities than in philosophical activities, it is better to plan towards doing activities that are more practical so the student will be able to grasp the main ideas.

I presented to the students a question regarding teachers they considered to be poor teachers and why they felt this way. There was a variety of responses. For example, one student said:

> In my Physics class, we just went right through the textbook. The textbook was just supposed to simply supplement the course. It was not supposed to be the course. . . . There was supposed to be experiments and a lot of other things to help you understand. We did not do any of that.

Rather than just teaching from the textbook, the students suggested that the use of experiments in science and the sharing of personal experiences in all courses enhances learning. Supporting this idea of conducting experiments in science classes, one student said:

> I would definitely increase the number of experiments because it is incredible how much more you learn by actually seeing it happen. . . . I am the type of person that always wants to know why something happens, simply telling is not enough. I want to see why. It really makes me feel good to see something happen. I think that is really effective.

In summation, the participants felt that good rural teachers are sufficiently flexible to alter their teaching strategies so that all students will better understand the concepts being taught. It is important to make the courses practical and interesting. Using laboratory experiments in science and real-life experiences helps to accomplish this.

Commitment to Student Success Outside of the Classroom

All of the interviewees suggested that senior high teachers in this County are willing to spend extra time with the student outside the classroom. To support this, the students gave various examples of teacher participation such as Graduation Council, drama activities, intramurals or possibly some coaching. By getting involved, the teacher is showing the students an interest in the student(s) on a personal level. The students have opportunties to observe the teacher in roles other than just the classroom teacher. One student reported that these teachers are easier to relate to because "They are just like us." To the students, this demonstrates that the teacher enjoys being with them.

Several participants explained that if rural teachers were not involved with extracurricular activities in the school, there would probably not be any. One student reported:

> I think the idea of being involved in extracurricular activities is very important. I was involved in a lot of them. If it was not for teacher involvement, a lot of the activities just would not be continued. It is a lot of their volunteer work that keeps the programs up.

The students perceived this type of teacher involvement as an important role outside of the classroom. This helps to promote student involvement and success in something besides academics. For one student, the teacher's extracurricular role is a measurement of what good teachers are really like. She spoke as follows:

> I see some enthusiasm on their part when they are willing to coach a team because that takes a lot of time, a lot of time they have to put in, especially on the weekends. I think that shows a lot of care and concern for the students, wanting to help them be the best they can be at something. The teachers I don't consider as good, I don't think they are involved at all. That is their job and they are not going to go beyond 4:00. Those are the ones that just rush out of

> school. They come and then they leave you. Those are the ones that I do not consider to be good teachers.

This type of involvement was perceived by the participants as a committment of *time* to the students by the teacher. One student commented that it is this committment of time that helps teachers become recognized as good teachers. In her words:

> I can think of one teacher who is no longer teaching here. He was definitely a favorite. He was very involved with the students, with student life in general. He was involved in sports, and with drama, he was always helping out with the props and everything. I think this is very important because it shows that they are willing to sacrifice time, personal time that they have after school to help more people. I think that is important because they are willing to sacrifice their personal life a little bit. . . . This helps the teacher get to know the individuals on a more personal level, and that definitely helps in teaching.

But most of the students also reported that teacher involvement in the extracurricular efforts should not necessarily be equated with the ability to teach in a classroom. To support this belief, one student said:

> It is important but you can have a person who is really involved in extracurrcular activities and it won't reflect in their teaching one bit. It just depends on the individual. You can have a person who is not involved at all yet is an excellent classroom teacher.

The participants all agreed, therefore, that rural teachers have an important role to play outside of the classroom. But the types and intensity of extracurricular involvement will vary from teacher to teacher. This teacher involvement conveys to the students a personal interest and concern for them.

Teachers Resourcefulness and Adaptability

Four of the six students reported that high schools in this County have limited equipment or outdated textbooks. Two of the students went further and suggested that these situations might be a result of reduced budgets. The students gave examples where the teachers needed to compensate or improvise. For example, one Fort Assiniboine student reported as follows:

> In the lab the other day, we only had one beaker. . . . We all had to use the same one rather than each of us having one so it took a lot longer. Some of the chemicals that are more expensive, we can't get in so we just have to skip over the experiments.

Similar occurrences were reported at Lorne Jenken, a much larger high school. Teachers are sometimes forced to improvise or make-do with the resources which are available. For example, one participant at Lorne Jenken stated:

> I know in our English class that we had to use a different book than what we were supposed to simply because there were not enough books to go around to each student. He had to totally alter the course just for that. In French and Physics, we were lacking lab equipment. I think that would definitely have an impact on a teacher.

Although Lorne Jenkin and Fort Assiniboine High Schools have different student enrollments and numbers of teachers, all of the participants felt that the senior high teachers are usually subject specialists. As one student in Fort Assiniboine stated, "We do not have a science major teaching math or anything like that even though some teachers might teach grade 7 and grade 12." One interviewee from Lorne Jenken, however, did present a situation where teachers taught outside their immediate area of expertise. The student stated, "The physical education department will teach various other courses such as personal living skills."

A Fort Assiniboine participant, however, made the point that smaller schools are sometimes not able to offer certain courses to a limited number of students. French was given as an example to describe how rural teachers are sometimes presented with various situations requiring some adaptability on their part. The following comment illustrated this point:

> Well, some of us take corresponsdence and we have a teacher in this school who knows how to speak French so a lot of the kids take French correspondence. But they need quite a bit of help with it, so he stays after school and helps them with their correspondence work.

Teacher adaptability is also required for other situations. For example, one student mentioned that senior high teachers usually have both academic and non-academic assignments. To clarify this further, one teacher instructs English 30 (academic) in addition to English 33 (non-academic). Although the teacher might be more familiar with the academic classes, the teacher should be prepared to accept the challenge, and be sufficiently adaptable to do a good job in both areas. In this way, all of the students will benefit from the instruction.

Personal Friendship Roles

Four of the six students reported the importance of teachers who sincerely care about what happens to students in and out of school. They also felt that the teacher should treat the student as an equal. As one student stated, "I call a lot of my teachers by their first names and that is just great."

The students also like teachers who encourage the student's success in life. Teachers should also be concerned about how the person is feeling on any particular day. One participant suggested that if a student has a problem, the teacher will try to get to the *root* of that problem. This type of teacher is considered very approachable and is looked upon by the student groups as a friend. Friend was defined by one participant as, "Someone you can tell your personal problems to." So the relationship becomes more than only going for extra help in course studies. For example, five of the six students reported that the rural teacher who is liked and trusted as a friend is sometimes approached to give advice on careers or personal problems even though a counsellor might be readily available. A Barrhead student commented on the willingness of her teachers to offer personal and realistic insights about careers:

> For a lot of them, I think it is their interest in making sure I do well in the future, that's the biggest for me. For a lot of them, they have definitely given me a lot of support . . . in making the right steps for career decisions or making sure that I pursue all avenues of the career spectrums. . . . I have gone to a lot of teachers for their opinons on certain careers and they have always given me an honest position. . . . I think a lot of them were really attempting to show me that not everything is going to be sunny and bright.

One participant felt that teacher roles include many different aspects. In the following quote, she described some of the ways in which respected teachers are approachable to students.

> I think, first of all that the teacher would want to be a friend for most of the students. . . . The fact that they cared about what was going on at home with me . . . and not so much just about my marks. . . . The teacher would be willing to spend as much time as possible to help the students understand. . . . The teachers are willing to stay after school and help you as much as they can . . . . I think it is important to know when to relax, just to joke around and not always be serious and to understand that . . . their students have other courses and activities. . . . I think a lot of teachers often forget about some of the pressures they had as students. . . . In addition, quite a few of the teachers realize that if you have a problem at home, it reflects in all your work. I know a lot of teachers here who are willing to get down to the root of the problem. I think that is really important.

A second student supported the feelings of the previous participant by stating:

> Most teachers know their students not only by face but by name and background. Since there are fewer teachers, more of them will do extracurricular activities on their own time as well as becoming personally involved with the student and their personal problems. The teacher is a confidant instead of just a teacher.

The participants agreed, therefore, that respected teachers are valued in different ways. They perceived these teachers as friends, people that they can count on for help with a range of circumstances which might confront them in daily life. The teacher is truly concerned about the welfare of the student.

Commitment to the Community

All six students reported that good rural senior high teachers try to meet the many different groups of people which comprise the community. In order to converse with and understand these people, the teacher requires a variety of communication skills. The students suggested that the teacher needs to be open-minded and accept the rural way of life as it is. This might involve some readjustment of the teacher's personal values especially if the teacher has grown up in a city. As long as the teacher is willing to try and fit-in to the rural values, then the community will accept that teacher. One student commented:

> People who have grown up on a farm or in a town are brought up with . . . different values. . . . The idea I have is that country people are . . . always more open and willing to accept things a lot more than city people. . . . I would say that teachers have to remain absolutely open-minded; don't come in with a close-minded attitude at all.

The students suggested that successful rural teachers recognize that rural settings are more intimate in social relationships and that anonymity, even if desired, is not likely. The community expects the teachers to become acquainted with the local people and to volunteer some time to the community. The grade 12 participants provided some examples of involvement such as teaching Sunday School, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Boy Scouts, or Little League. The participants stressed that the community views this type of teacher as a person who wants to help the youth of the community; such involvement signifies to them that the teacher is a good role model for young people.

The students, however, emphasized that the involvement should relate to the young people of the community. For example, teacher involvement in local political parties is perceived by the students as being of little value to the youth. In response to a question regarding community involvement, one participant stated:

> I think sometimes teachers can overextend themselves with the attempt to get involved in the school as well as the community events and that they find they cannot put their 100% in either. They are just giving a little bit to each part and in that case they suffer and the students suffer. . . . I don't know if it adds anything to the student anyway because in a lot of cases, we are not involved in those community events or community societies. We don't have any real say in these matters nor do they really affect us. . . . I think if the teacher is known in the community and has an outstanding quality of being there to help and organize things within the community that they will find a lot of respect from the parents. But for most cases, I think parents are more concerned with how the students are doing within the school instead of how the teacher is doing within the community.

To summarize, the students acknowledged that several teachers are currently involved in different types of community affairs. Some of the activities involve young people whereas some do not. They suggested involvement is an excellent way for the teacher to meet a wide spectrum of people and to be known in the community. Most of the participants felt, however, that community involvement by the teachers should include and benefit the youth.

Summary

This chapter has presented what six grade 12 students from Fort Assiniboine and Barrhead, Alberta consider to be important to the success and acceptance of teachers currently working or planning to work in the County of Barrhead #11.

The participants emphasized that a teacher's success and acceptance in a rural setting is more easily achieved if teachers, regardless of background, are prepared to accept reduced levels of anonymity. It was also suggested that visiting or student-teaching in rural settings might help ease the initial adjustments necessary for teachers from urban settings. This personal initiative would provide good opportunities for these new senior high teachers to observe and better understand what rural schools are like.

All of the participants advised that rural teachers should become familiar with the students, parents, and other community groups on a personal basis if possible. The teacher's ability to successfully communicate with farmers, oil employees, and lumber employees and others was perceived by the students as being a valuable tool in becoming known and accepted within the community.

Enhancing student success is seen by all participants as a vital role of rural senior high teachers in this County. Most of the interviewees acknowledged teachers who arrive from any location are accepted by students and parents as long as they are good classroom teachers. They must also attempt to help each student reach their academic potential. The

students felt that this requires some individualization of instruction by the teacher. Using a range of teaching strategies will likely be necessary in order to successfully reach students with diverse backgrounds and aspirations.

All of the participants also suggested that good teachers are able to cultivate student success outside of the classroom when the teacher willingly participates in some extracurricular activities. But they emphasized that a teacher's involvement should first centre around activities which will provide some benefit to youth. Community activities that the teachers might personally enjoy, but do not necessarily help students, were seen as secondary roles for teachers. This was the case even though the participants viewed these activities as potential ways to meet people.

In addition, most of the participants commented that rural teachers can also nurture student success by being available to students who wish to discuss possible career options. Helping students overcome personal problems was also viewed by some participants as a valued teacher asset. Moreover, several participants perceived good senior high teachers in this County as recognizing that agriculture is important to the local economy and lifestyle, and that some students will have farm commitments, especially at harvest time.

All of the interviewees agreed that the senior high teachers in this County are subject specialists. Some suggested, however, that smaller school enrollments and budgets often result in less equipment, outdated textbooks, and teaching commitments which are sometimes outside the major area of expertise of their teachers. This calls for the teachers to be more adaptable and resourceful than might be required in an urban setting.

All of the students advised that personal satisfaction is gained by teachers through their classroom performance, opportunities for personal interaction with students, and personal appreciation and enjoyment of the natural surroundings. Being within driving distance of a larger centre was also seen as an advantage to new teachers to this County who are more acquainted with a wider range of shopping conveniences.

Chapter 5
What The Teachers Said!

Introduction

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the interview data gathered from five senior high teachers from Lorne Jenken Senior High in Barrhead, Alberta and two senior high teachers from Fort Assiniboine High School in Fort Assiniboine, Alberta. The analysis is presented in such a way as to address the following research question:

What is important to senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead #11 which contributes to the success and acceptance of rural teachers?

The findings suggested that the teacher's personal values and lifestyle, the personal interactions with the students, the community's willingness to accept the teacher, as well as the teacher's ability and willingness to gain community acceptance, reflect on teaching success in this County.

Initial Background Findings

Three of the teachers were former urbanites while the remaining four were originally from rural settings. For three teachers, this was their first teaching position. Two others already based in the County transferred to secondary school from an elementary teaching position. The average length of service at Lorne Jenken and Fort Assiniboine high schools is 9 years and 18 years respectively. Six of the teachers are married and live in the community. One teacher is single, and one commutes to the workplace. Five of the teachers indicated that there were no recent major teaching changes to their assignments. Only one of the participants reported a desire to relocate and teach in an urban area. Higher wages and a more diverse range of cultural amenities such as opera presentations at the Jubilee Auditorium or Citadel Theatre were given as main attractions in larger centres such as Edmonton, Alberta. Finally, only one participant mentioned smaller classes as being a major benefit to teaching in this County.

The Major Categories

The major categories which emerged from data obtained from the senior high teachers and which appear to impact on successful and accepted rural teaching are:

Awareness of Traditional Rural Values

Five of seven teachers strongly asserted that rural teachers should be aware of values the community considers important to the local society, and especially to the school. In other words, as several interviewees alluded to, it is important for the teacher to find out what is considered valued and accepted by the whole community. For example, one participant reported a situation where some curriculum changes were going to be introduced into the school. He indicated that some of the changes were considered by the community to be *morally sensitive* , and that the community believed they should first be evaluated by certain teachers before their introduction into the curriculum.

This senior high participant felt strongly that rural teachers must decide whether or not personal involvement in these types of situations is worth the potential negative repercusions from the community. In otherwords, the teacher must determine where the "fine line" between community acceptance and community rejection is located. He offered the following example to vividly illustrate this kind of scenario:

> What the individual perceives the community to be successful, and I am a very conservative sort of person, I don't have any problems with that. But some who have been known to be more liberal in their thinking and found a bit of pressure on them, not that I would choose to live any differently if I lived in the middle of the city--my values are long since clarified. It is a little hard to tread that fine line between acceptance and [word unclear]. The difficulty is the willingness to take the risk that some activity will not be acceptable. For example, the novel that has been used in this school in English 33 contains offensive language. . . . I am unwilling to use that novel this semester because I find the language offensive myself and I have had parental reaction to less offensive things in the first semester. I don't want any more of that. So maybe I am not willing to take the risk either. I just feel that there are other ways I can handle and achieve the same results without using that particular novel. . . . When the parent who was objecting to what I was doing in the first semester went to the principal, superintendent, and to her board member, because of what she considered to be offensive, she is rather narrow-minded--I was in the spotlight. I just don't feel that I need that kind of thing. I'd rather get on with the job of teaching rather than get embroiled in some sort of conflict.

In addition, one participant emphasized the importance for rural senior high teachers to be aware of specific situations which might affect the school attendance of certain students in this County. For example, one teacher from Fort Assiniboine mentioned some

students are occasionally involved in the harvest while others go hunting. As the following quotation indicates, this participant accepts and understands students who are absent from school due to harvesting obligations:

> Harvest time and, therefore, he's out harvesting and not at school. I suppose in a sense somehow we haven't had a real lot of that. We have had more of hunting which is a favorite pastime. There has even been a couple of people, parents that have been guides, hunting guides for people who come from the States and so on, but it's not, other than that it's not an occupation. It's a pastime. I've had more problems with that, you know the parents would take the kids off and go hunting for two days rather than coming to school. I haven't really had much problem with you know kids staying home helping with the harvesting. They seem to work around it somehow.

Both of the above participants provided excellent examples where rural teachers need to understand and be aware of values which are prized by the community. In the first example, the participant suggested that rural teachers in this County must be knowledgeable of the *lines of acceptance* within the community. The second example clearly illustrated that farm students have responsibilities at home, on the farm. During the harvest, this participant felt it is easier for rural teachers to accept student absenteeism if they personally understand that farming is an important occupation to the local economy. But he also indicated during the interview, guiding activities by a few people in this community also result in student absenteeism, but it doesn't seem to be as important to the community. As he stated, "It's a pastime."

Becoming An Accepted Member Of The Community

Most of the participants offered a variety of suggestions to enhance the likelihood that a teacher will be accepted by their community. Four participants advised that living in the community *helps* the teacher become accepted quicker. They suggested by being a resident of the community, that the teacher is readily able to meet and converse with a large percentage of the local people. However, as one participant explained, the community is also prepared to accept teachers who are not living in the community. I asked this interviewee from Fort Assiniboine if a teacher commuting from Barrhead to Fort Assiniboine is accepted into the community in the *same way* as a teacher living in the Fort. This was his response:

> No I don't think so. . . . He is kind of an outsider. But then I think people can live in a community and still be considered an outsider. I felt that way for a good many years when we first came here. Now you know, I think through involvement with the community that I feel a part of the community. . . . I think on the other hand too, you can be accepted if you don't live here. Not accepted

> as part of the community, but accepted as a good teacher. Because there are many teachers that live in Barrhead that have been here for many years that are accepted. People like them and they come to the open houses. They know the teacher and they talk with them, no problems at all. But I think living here has its advantages. I think it helps.

Conversely, two participants strongly emphasized that the community also has responsibilities to new teachers. Further, one interviewee reported that fitting-in or changing the teacher to that particular rural lifestyle should not be a *requirement* of community acceptance. Both suggested that teachers from urban centres bring with them a different *cultural baggage* , in addition to other assets such as musical expertise or different educational ideas. They felt the community should accept and perceive these assets as enriching to the community rather than being detrimental to the established values. In support of this *give and take* relationship, one participant emphatically stated:

> It does not matter where you go. You are not going to come into a community that services 16 thousand people, you are an outsider [italics added] to begin with. You are not going to come in here and change things around so that they meet your expectations. No you have to meet theirs. I also believe that the community or those that you work with also have a responsibility to also share in this type of thing so that there is a give and take [italics added] on both sides so that a person can really find themselves assimilating in the community. It was not all work on one side as opposed to just the person. It was part community and part that person who comes into town.

In addition, one Fort Assiniboine participant discussed this idea from the viewpoint of teacher acceptance and the length of time spent in the community. He explained if a new teacher to an area has a feeling of acceptance from the community, then that person will probably feel that he or she is somewhat successful. As a result, that teacher will probably remain longer in the community. However, the opposite can also be true according to this teacher. He elaborated as follows:

> Well, if a teacher feels that he's not liked in a community, then it has an effect on how he behaves in class, maybe not outwardly, but how he feels and that would certainly make on whether he decides to move or to stay. Now I feel that most people in the community know me and appreciate me. I get along well with most people in the community. I haven't had any real problems and so I don't feel there's an overwhelming need for me to get out of here, to move because things are, pressures too much and it's too much of a strain on me. And so I suppose that has an effect on the ability of success.

As most participants suggested, being accepted by the community is a give and take situation. It is not totally up to the community nor is it entirely up to the new teacher to become comfortable in a new setting. In the previous example, the participant indicated

that he has become known to the local people. He reported that he is accepted and appreciated within the community. For him, the first step to acceptance was *getting involved* .

Acceptance of Increased Visibility

Several groups of people comprise this rural County. Each group possesses a unique set of values. Five of the seven participants advised rural teachers should willingly accept that they will have less privacy in these rural settings. They suggested it is to the teacher's benefit to converse, get to know, and better understand the local farmers, merchants, colleagues and students. They commented that this leads to a mutual understanding of each other's roles. One participant reflected on this thought by sharing the following quote:

> I think a teacher can be one heck of a PR person, public relations. How the person sees you and how you see the public and the interaction between the two. You've got all different types of levels in a society out there. Let's face it we know that. There are strata's whether we wish to believe that there or not. They are there and some of these people need to see what we are like outside of the classroom. They need to sit down and talk with us, very open and very frank, non-hypocritical. Not trying to cover anything up. . . . This of course spreads around. . . . It creates a better understanding.

A Barrhead participant described specific experiences relating to *being noticed* on a continual basis. He stated:

> When I teach my kids in class . . . I see the same kids on the street. I see the same kids at the hockey arena. I see the same kids at the ball diamond. I see the same kids downtown and I see them everywhere I go. They're part of my community. I have to interact with them both in school and in the community, and I have to support them in both places in the sense that I'm interested in their whole person. They may also just live down the street from me, which is very common, rather than it being a chance happening in West Edmonton Mall. And so I get to know them as whole people. I may in fact be involved with their parents, or in organizations with their parents. . . .

Further, one Barrhead interviewee described teachers in this rural community as follows:

> We have no anonymity. We as rural teachers are known as teachers. We might as well wear a sign on our back everytime we go downtown. There is absolutely no way that we can hide our activities. Our movements about the community are all monitored by the community. Everyone is very aware of who is a teacher and where they teach and so on, and it's unusual to be anywhere in the community without being recognized and addressed as a teacher. I think, therefore, we probably are more concerned with our role and the vision that parents have of us, than perhaps a city teacher who has the anonymity of numbers.

The participants suggested that teachers in rural areas shold be prepared to accept a reduced level of anonymity. As one Lorne Jenken participant described, teachers who have left after only a short duration, often left because they were unwilling to accept the loss of privacy. As the following quotation illustrates, they were unwilling to get out and meet people; rather they chose to remain private which is difficult to do in smaller places:

> Those who valued their privacy for example, haven't stayed long because . . . we just don't have private lives as a teacher. So I suppose that ability to interact with the community, the commitment to the teaching process beyond the classroom.

However, increased visibility was not viewed by all participants as a disadvantage. For example, one former urbanite made a comment about how new teachers attending certain student activities can often lead to a better rapport in the classroom. She described this idea in the following way:

> Well, I am sympathetic to new teachers because they've got a lot of work to do. The first two years of teaching, I think you're pretty well swamped. It's a nice idea if they have a little bit of time to get out a little bit you know and see whose in the plays and who's curling you know on the student curling team and stuff like that. It's just something extra that you can praise a student about and that makes your relationship a little bit closer and then things go a little easier in class.

In summation, all of the participants alluded to rural teachers as having less anonymity. It will not take long before the people of the community know who you are. As one French teacher mentioned, "Oh, some of them didn't take that long, obviously the people that are involved with school in anyway, shape or form would know quite quickly and then by word of mouth." They pointed out that new teachers should be prepared to accept this reality. For some participants, increased visibility in the community was not perceived as a bad thing; rather it could be used to their benefit. One participant shared an example where new teachers can become involved as spectators at young people's activifies which often leads to positive experiences in the classroom. Many interviewees used descriptive words to illustrate teacher visibility. They suggested to be successful and accepted, rural teachers are *seen* to be somewhat outgoing, enthusiastic, approachable, confident, and involved.

Enjoyment Of The Rural Lifestyle

Six of the seven participants reported that rural teachers appreciate the amenities of rural life. The openness, peace and quiet, relaxed atmosphere, slower-pace, smaller number of people, close relationships, and the excellent opportunities for fishing, hunting and canoeing are descriptive terms utilized by many of the interviewees. They emphasized that for teachers be happy and feel successful in rural settings, they need to assimilate and willingly become a part of the natural surroundings. Making reference to differences in the *pace* between city life and rural life, one former urbanite described why he especially enjoys the rural lifestyle:

> I find the city to be a very fast moving place where a lot of things are happening both day and night, and in order for you to cohabitate in the city you also have to be part of this fast moving element. Everything revolves and evolves around you quite fast and you have to be able to take it and go with it. Go with the flow. Then you come into the rural area and things are slowed down dramatically to a very slow pace. I think that this is the thing that is most difficult for me to adjust to because I am a fellow that is a get up and go. After eight years, I still get up and go but I have been able to adjust my lifestyle outside of the class and outside of the school environment. I have been able to slow that right down and I enjoy it tremendously. I know it has probably added 10 years to my life.

A second senior high participant, formerly from a *large* urban centre, described his current feelings about the rural lifestyle in the County of Barrhead:

> Here after school I can go and relax. I can meet my friends downtown if I want a cocktail or beer or something, chit chat, go home. It's a small size town. You don't have the rush of the big city. You can go home, you have a nice setting, garden to work at, neighbors to talk with, very easy going lifestyle. You've got everything you want in this town as far as I'm concerned. . . .

One participant was very enthusiatic when talking about what the rural lifestyle has meant to him. He was born in the Barrhead area. Therefore, he is familiar with the natural amenities which are offered in this rural environment. He felt that this setting has provided many positive experiences for him and that it is this community where he wants to raise his children. I asked him to elaborate further why a rural environment was a preferred location for him to raise his children. He explained:

> I suppose it is a definition of values, things that we value--a basic good place to live--space, concern for environment--appreciation of natural surroundings rather than the artificialities of city living. To complement that, I have chosen to live on an acreage.

As this interviewee said, "Oh Barrhead is home." He indicated that he prefers a rural community but, "then maybe that is because of total unfamiliarity with an urban setting." His satisfaction became evident during the interview when he described his pleasure with the familiarity and comfort that this community has provided him and his family. He indicated that this community is enjoyable to live in because of the open spaces and an appreciation of the natural surroundings. For him, living in a rural setting makes him happy.

Experiencing Rural Life Beforehand

Six of the seven participants experienced rural life before accepting a position in the County of Barrhead. For a couple of the teachers, the experience was very limited in that they only worked for a short time in or made a visit to the County. But this still provided them with some good opportunities to assess the school and community resources before accepting a position. One former urbanite issued the following advice to prospective teachers in this County:

> I think if a person is going to teach in a place, go out and have a look. I don't know about you but when I sign a contract I read the small print. It's the same with going to take a teaching assignment. You're living in that community. Go out and have a look to see if you're going to like what there is there.

Furthermore, four of the teachers were born in rural settings, two of them in the Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine areas. They suggested that their rural upbringing was a major reason for them choosing to remain in a rural setting. One of these teachers reflected on his decision:

> I certainly have what you might call agricultural roots and being close to the community we are in, a farming community, close to farming situations. A lot of our friends are farming people and the thorough enjoyment of spending time on their farm, some of my family are on farms again. It is very enjoyable too, of course. We chose to remain in this type of community because we wanted to raise our sons in a farming community.

Insofar as being a direct link to teacher success, most of the participants were quick to point out that previous exposure to rural settings only presents a person with less adjustments to make. The rural person already has a pictoral perception of what lies ahead. One participant pointed out, however, that teachers from urban settings can also enjoy a good life here as long as they are able to adjust to the rural lifestyle. Supporting this view is a participant originally from a small rural community. His comments were as follows:

> I think really someone from a rural community might in a small way have an advantage over someone who grew up in the city, but I really don't think that's a prerequisite. I think anyone growing up anywhere could be successful teaching in a rural school, but I think it would have to be someone who does not require, somebody that can adapt to a different lifestyle. You know wide open spaces and not having the rush and the bustle of the city with them when they go home at night. And if you are used to going to the mall every night and things like that, well you can't do that here. But if you can sort of adjust, well then I think anyone can be successful in a small community.

The participants felt that experiencing a rural setting is not necessarily guaranteeing success for a new teacher. But as the previous example indicated, teachers from different lifestyles will have to adjust their current lifestyle in order to better fit the rural lifestyle. They emphasized new teachers should be prepared to have a decreased variety of shopping or cultural amenities. However, as long as the individual is personally capable of adapting to the new realities, they advised that any new teacher has the potential to experience more success and acceptance.

Adjusting to the Community

All of the participants talked about the amount of *personal adjusting* which was required upon their arrival. For each of them, the types of adjustment were different. Teachers originally from rural settings indicated that the adjustments necessary to live in this County were very minimal, mainly because they had already experienced rural life and they basically knew what to expect. But as one Fort Assiniboine interviewee explained, an adjustment to teaching rather than to the rural lifestyle was required for him. He recalled, "It was mainly an adjustment to teaching, becoming a teacher."

However, several former urbanites indicated that an adjustment to the rural lifestyle was required when they arrived, although most did not consider this a very difficult assignment. For most of these urbanites, a new curriculum, a reduced salary, the slower pace of life, and limited shopping or cultural facilties caused a re-adjustment from their previous urban lifestyle. But in most cases, the openness and generosity of the local people, or the close proximity to a larger centre helped in reducing the amount of adjustment. For example, one teacher was impressed by the dinner invitations he received upon his arrival in Barrhead. Another Lorne Jenken participant commented on her initial experience14 years ago:

> Okay, it was a little difficult at the beginning because I came up early to get myself an apartment and at that time there were none in Barrhead. I think there were two buildings and they were all taken up, so I had to board in a private home for a month and I'd never done that before so that was a little different. But again my landlady was super. I found it a little strange because she said

> she never locked her door and if I should come home and the door somehow got locked, she showed that she kept a key up on the outside of the house, so that to me was weird. Nobody in Barrhead knew addresses, they just would say, "Well they live over near this person or that person and if you want to find out where everybody is, you just drive around and see where that person's car is and then you just go in." That was a little strange. I didn't have a vehicle but at least the buses came here so I could go into Edmonton once in awhile. I really felt disadvantaged because of the public library facility here at the time. I really would have preferred being closer to Edmonton Public Library or the University Library. That's what I was used to, so there's one disadvantage.

She indicated that the accommodation and library facilities are better now. But as she said, "It's still nice to be able to have access to more." This perception of being somewhat limited in these rural settings is further supported by a former urbanite who emphasized the importance of being close to a larger centre, especially if you have been used to a wider diversity of culture. Edmonton was used as a specific example. He explained:

> I think there is much more culture to be had in the big city than there is in the small town. It stands for itself. The big city has so much population that they can afford to bring in the best that's available and you can always see it for a price. Like if we talk about our town here. If you want to go downtown, it doesn't take long to know everything about the downtown. But if you go into a city--we can use Edmonton as an example, there are so many different areas within Edmonton itself. All different sections of the city, Chinatown, West Edmonton Mall, the Citadel, the Science Centre, the municipal airport. It's right downtown, all of these things. There's a variety of things that we don't have here that would entice me.

Adjusting was illustrated in other ways. Several participants talked about the personal and professional opportunities which must be sacrificed or delayed because of where you live. They suggested if your present community is a distance away from a larger centre, then it is often too inconvenient to be included in these activities, even if you really wanted to. However, if you are close to or living in a city, the city amenities are more available to you. One participant described some of the activities that she would partake in if she was living in a city such as Edmonton:

> I guess going out into the public a little bit more. Like I've always noticed in the paper that they're having an author do some readings at the University or authors signing books at a bookstore. It would be great to take the kids there, but the hours are always inconvenient. If I was in the city I think I'd probably drag them all over. I think it would be easier for me to think about upgrading my own background if I'm close to the University. I would maybe take a night course or something like that whereas with my family and with my school load, I can't. I don't have the energy to drive into the city you know one night a week or two nights a week or whatever. I just can't do that yet but I'd really like to, you know get my Masters.

This participant accounted for many activities which would be beneficial for herself and her students if she was living in or near a city. And it shows one more way in which a teacher must adjust when coming to a rural community in this County. During the interview, this former urbanite indicated that she would like to do these things in the future. But she enjoys her teaching career in Barrhead and was also very enthusiastic when describing the local amenities and the many activities a person can become involved in. She described herself as being very happy here and having no immediate intentions of relocating to another area.

Contentment With Senior High Schools In This County

Six of the participants indicated that they enjoy teaching in this County. Most of them suggested being personally recognized for doing a good job with the students as being very gratifying to them. Further to this, four of the teachers expressed comfort with the quality of education currently being offered to the students. Two participants shared their views regarding the personal contentment and recognition they obtain from their teaching experiences:

> I like it. I suppose this whole thing of social acceptance, this whole thing of not being anonymous is significant even though I am rather a retiring sort of person. I am not terribly outgoing at all but it is, it's got to be recognized and with the sense of somebody who appreciates what you are doing as a staff, as a school, as a school system. It is great to be identified in that way as a successful school as far as the community is concerned.

> The staff I work with are very competent people. The friendliness of the staff, they are quite willing to help you if you need help. The administration is right there and when we need help from them, we get it. I am happy at doing what I am doing. I get up in the morning and I am glad to come to work. I do not say, "Oh another day at that school again." I am happy to come here and teach. If any one day I get up and I ever say to myself, "Ah I got to go teach again", I would quit!

One Lorne Jenken participant talked about professional growth and school support for the teachers in that school. She emphasized the opportunities to share ideas as well as current knowledge with the staff. She also felt that she is part of a *school team* within the school. When talking about the ideal type of teacher for this school, she elaborated by saying, "Someone who is a team person and likes to work with others." She believes that the team approach provides teacher support and opportunities within the school.

Several participants viewed teacher contentment and support as also coming from the students. Two teachers previously from urban settings advised, in general, rural students

in this County are more polite and better behaved than their urban counterparts. One participant was extremely pleased about the students total commitment to the school. In his words, "They are willing to take *ownership* and responsibility for the school." He made comments about how his job is made easier when the students *believe* in the school:

> The students in this school are great people to work with. They are not like or unlike anybody else. They have a personality of their own. They are willing to accept the ownership of the school, and they have pride in the school I think. That is something I always have to keep working on. It sort of ebbs and flows, and wanes and increases with students but generally speaking the students in this school make this school work. They are willing to do that. They are willing to carry their load and so it is not a constant battle. You also have problem students no matter where you go or what happens I guess, but here I think the students are willing to carry that load. They know that this is their school and I appreciate that a great deal. It makes my job a whole lot easier. They are nice people and they have some values. I do not always agree with what they have, I do not always think that they are right, but I appreciate what they bring.

A second participant at Lorne Jenken, formerly from a large city in Eastern Canada, shared his feelings about rural senior high students in this County. For him, a great deal of his job satisfaction is obtained from the students. He commented:

> I find the students are a much better lot to teach than in the city. Now whether that comes from the environment, the household environment, or the community environment, I don't know. But I find the students here are much more polite, well-mannered. I find that many of the students here are really motivated to get a good education out of the system.

Teacher recognition and support was viewed by many of the participants as being very important to them. For this interviewee, the rural students in this County are well-mannered and personally motivated to do well in school. He made it clear during the interview that he really enjoys that! This teacher feels personally contented in knowing that he is helping them achieve some academic success.

Encouraging Student Success

All of the participants agreed that a teacher's main function is teaching. One teacher confirmed this by saying, "Number one thing is doing a qualified job at the position you were hired to do and that is in your teaching station." They felt that teachers should be available and involved with students, to help them reach their potentials, academic or otherwise. The following comment illustrated how one participant believes teachers can promote student success:

> The object of a teacher isn't to change behavior, the object of teaching is to bring out what is there to the maximum of that student's capabilities. That's our job, it isn't to change people's perceptions or change their realities, to change their values or anything like that. And how we do that is really important. I think one of the things we have to recognize as teachers all of the time consistently day in and day out is where these kids are coming from and where it is we would like them to be at the end of this particular teaching experience.

Several participants talked about their respective school's good *academic records* and how well the students have done after grade 12. For example, a teacher from Fort Assiniboine suggested many of the students from his school go on to and become successful in university or college. One Lorne Jenken interviewee supplemented this by including the teacher as a major contributor to these student successes. His comments were:

> We have a lot of students who are very successful academically, who work very hard and I think that's the work ethic I was referring to earlier. But it's also true that they have a lot of teachers who've made a big commitment so it's a partnership and that partnership is pretty real.

One Barrhead participant talked about the *extra efforts* and time that he is willing to offer to students, in particular the ones who are unable to remain after school because of the bus commitments. During the interview, he *strongly* emphasized that he wants all students to do well and as this quotation indicates, he is one of several teachers in this rural setting who are very committed to ensuring the overall success of the students:

> See we have to take into consideration that a large percentage of our student population are bussed into school everyday. They're bussed in, they're bussed out. The only time they're going to get help from the teacher is before in the morning, at noon. They're not going to get it after because they have to board the bus to go home so I believe that teachers in a rural setting and I know that those in this school do help students a lot at noon depending on the particular problem he or she may have. I know that I've been doing it for 8 years and most of the time my lunch is eaten in the classroom while I'm helping students but that's okay. You know this is fine with me, because I believe . . . in helping the students.

As this participant clearly illustrated, senior high teachers in this County have personal responsibilities extending beyond the normal school workload. By encouraging success through personal involvement, they are conveying to the students a feeling of concern and caring. They want the students to be successful, now and later!

Teacher Compatibility

All seven interviewees suggested that teacher success and acceptance is more achievable when the teacher communicates, understands and *gets along* with students and parents. Living in a smaller location offers excellent opportunities for teachers to become familiar with many of the parents. The participants believe that rural teachers in this County need to be friendly persons. If the parent feels comfortable communicating with the teacher outside of parent-teacher interviews, a clearer understanding and more collegial relationship is likely to develop. The teacher knows what to expect from the parent and the parent understands the role of the teacher. Understanding and communicating with the various families is extremely important, according to this Fort Assiniboine teacher:

> I think also that you have to be able to get along with the families of these kids as well as just the kids, because in a small community, like I said earlier, everybody knows who I am, you meet them all the time, you talk with them. You have to be able to get along with them as well as the kids.

One interviewee used the words *coming from* while explaining the advantages of being compatible to parents and students. I asked for further clarification as to his intent of the meaning of *coming from*. His response was:

> Well like the parents. I think the home has a lot of influence on the kids and you know the way they're brought up and you know the way their parents are. Maybe this is why the kids sort of behave the way they do. . . . I mean there's always lots of things you like to talk about with the parents at parent-teacher interviews not just, "Well can you tell me about the kid?" or "How does the kid behave at home?" We get to know the students better.

In addition, four participants reported that a *lack of getting along* by some rural teachers has led to discipline problems, unsuccessful teaching and non-acceptance for those teachers. They felt that it is important for rural teachers to be communicative with the students on a name to name basis. Knowing the students in a personal way conveys a message to the student that the teacher does not have a superior attitude; rather the relationship is one of equality. One teacher talked about how he successfully communicates with the students:

> My ability to teach effectively, my down-to-earth approach with the students. I am not sitting on a pedestal. I am sitting at a student desk with the student. The communication that we have is very nice and easygoing in the classroom but it is still a very good learning environment. It is not so structured an environment that you sometimes meet in classes which make classes blah as far as I am concerned. They turn off students.

For this participant, compatibility meant having the student on the same level as the teacher. During the interview, he talked about equality and how important it was for him to make the students feel comfortable and relaxed in the classroom. This interviewee wants the students to feel free to communicate with him, or to get extra help from him. He felt that if the teacher places himself or herself on a level higher than the students, communication from the students will decrease. Compatibility between the main actors, therefore, will also decrease.

Most of the participants accentuated teachers must get to know the students and parents before a caring and compatible relationship can be established. Once the relationship has been developed, one teacher felt that the student will be more willing to call the teacher for such things as extra help. The following comment illustrated this point.

> Well a lot of after school type of work. I don't know, obviously if that's professional responsibility as defined, but the fact that a child will feel comfortable enough to ask for extra help and stay or as I mentioned the phone call which happens fairly often. The fact that a parent can phone up and say, "Look Johnny's having trouble, can he get some extra help" if Johnny's too shy to ask or, "What can I do to help, can I come in to see you on a certain day after school" and so on. I think there's a comraderie, that is not likely to be felt among total strangers. . . . A feeling of, that we care beyond school time. . . . It removes the sort of business like approach that has to occur between strangers, and it's that familiarity that is quite a factor I think.

The participants suggested senior high teachers in this County should attempt to build an atmosphere of *fellowship* between themselves, the students and parents. To accomplish this, they viewed teachers as being strong communicators, people who display ease when meeting these community groups. As the previous quotation indicated, once a favourable rapport has been established, it then becomes easier for students and parents to also communicate with the teacher. The outgrowth of this healthy relationship is further success and mutual acceptance of the parties involved.

Resourceful and Flexible Teaching

Depending on the size of the rural community, the level and types of resourcefulness and flexibility varies. Both participants at Fort Assiniboine reported senior high teachers in this school consider themselves to be *generalists*. As one participant pointed out, the population of the town is only 300 people. Although the school offers a wide selection of academic subjects, the limited budget restricts the quantity of options and vocational subjects. Because of the smaller school population (only 45 in grades 10 to 12), they feel that the few teachers hired must be prepared to teach a variety of subject areas. For

example, one of the teachers in Fort Assiniboine currently has fifteen subject preparations for the 1988/1989 school year. Further, the average number of *subject areas and grades* taught by these senior high participants is 4.0 and 5.0 respectively. Both teachers interviewed stated they are also required to instruct in the Junior High School. One interviewee in Fort Assiniboine commented about the wider range of subjects new teachers can expect to handle when they come to small rural schools:

> Well the big thing is what you have to be good at, you know what you have to be able to handle as far as courses go, because in a small school, there are few teachers. So the teachers there have to handle lots of courses. In a large school, I have a friend that moved away recently down Calgary area, and he just has to handle a few courses and that's all. He has several classes you know of say Physics 20 or something, but I just have one class of Physics 20. My load is made up of a whole bunch of different courses rather than one or two courses in a bunch of different classes. So I think that's the main thing, you have to to able to teach lots of different things.

Teaching competence was mentioned by several participants as being a very important quality of successful teachers. A Fort Assiniboine teacher indicated that he has no formal training in Accounting, yet he is still required to teach it. For this teacher, becoming competent in this subject area was achieved from *experience*, not formal training. He believed, therefore, that teachers in small rural areas should expect to have teaching assignments outside their area of expertise. He articulated this viewpoint by saying:

> I was qualified to teach French. Now of course when you have a degree in Education and you get your teaching certificate, you're qualified I guess in quotation marks to teach anywhere, but my field of expertise was French and Math. I taught French and that was dropped. . . . I teach Accounting 10, 20, 30 now. I have never taken an accounting course in my life. The first year I taught it, I learned ahead of the kids and the next year I remembered and I got better at it. So it's experience that qualifies me not training.

Teaching a wide range of subjects was a major point of discussion during the interviews at Fort Assiniboine. One of the participants from this school offered the following advice to teachers considering accepting positions in small rural areas similar to Fort Assiniboine. He expressed his feelings in the following manner:

> Well, I don't think they can become as specialized if they're going to be in a rural area. They have to be open to teaching other subjects. There may not be enough of one subject to go around. Or they have to teach from grade 7 up to grade 12 in that field like in science or math. If they want to teach math only, they have to teach all the math 7,8,9,10, and 11,12.

In contrast, I was informed that Lorne Jenken High School in Barrhead, Alberta is a centralized school; the student enrollment for grades 10 to 12 was given as approximately 650 students. Students from two other communities, Swan Hills and Neerlandia, also come to this school to complete their senior years. It was suggested that the larger school budget provides for a more diverse spectrum of subject areas. As a result, Lorne Jenken has an Academic and Vocational Wing. To accommodate the subjects, many more teachers have been hired. All five teachers interviewed at this school consider themselves to be specialists. Furthermore, the average number of *subject areas and grades* taught by these teachers is 1.4 and 3.0 respectively.

Although not a routine practice, teaching courses outside of one's area of expertise *occasionally* occurs in this school also. One participant shared the experience of a former first-year teacher to Lorne Jenken who was confronted with what was described as "an impossible teaching assignment". She mentioned that the teacher left after only one year. This interviewee explained as follows:

> Oh, I always think a person has an expertise in one area, two if he's really lucky, you know. If you have to teach a science course, maybe science 11, chemistry, English, personal psychology, I can't remember what the other two this gal had for example, I could never imagine myself doing it and I'm a seasoned teacher, you know. So that's the kind of impossible teaching assignments. That doesn't happen here often but it did once or twice. It wasn't very nice.

A second participant from Lorne Jenken echoed similar occurrences to the previous scenario. To reduce the likelihood that an incoming teacher would be confronted with *unexpected* teaching assignments, which breeds disenchantment in his view, this interviewee suggested the following to prospective teachers, "I don't know about you but when I sign a contract, I read the fine print."

Four of the teachers in both schools suggested other ways in which some rural teachers must be prepared to be flexible and resourceful. For example, equipment and textbooks were occasionally described as *limited or outdated*. As one Fort Assiniboine teacher explained, "You have to be resourceful. I think of equipment for instance in the Physics area, the lab that we have is terrible." But for these kinds of situations, this teacher emphasized, "You have to make-do with what you've got." Further, one of the teachers from Lorne Jenken advised that the school budget has a significant impact on the amount of working space available for his physical education classes. He suggested that *making-do* with the available resources is a reality in this school. He remarked:

> Primarily we have to make do with space, more so than with equipment, although to a lesser extent we have to make do with equipment as well. It's been one of the problems in our area that as a physical educator, not just myself but the rest of the physical educators in the County, we certainly don't feel that we have been given an overextensive budget to work with. We operate on a limited budget and that's another make do situation. We operate in a very limited space comparatively with some other areas, and with many rural areas. I've visited many schools, a lot of them more rural than we are, and they certainly have a far greater working space than what we do. That's one of the things you learn to adjust to.

This senior high physical education participant talked about school situations in this County where the teacher has to make-do with the available resources. Limited equipment and work space were two examples given to illustrate this point. However, this teacher also mentioned that he was quite content in his current position. As he said, "You adjust and learn to make do with what you have." He also takes satisfaction in believing that the students are still obtaining a good education, even with a smaller gymnasium or less equipment!

This person, like so many of the other participants talked about the reduced school budget as being the main force in causing limitations of school resources. Most of them added that new senior high teachers to this County must be prepared to adjust to this reality.

Accepting Other Professional Roles

Six of the participants reported other possible roles besides classroom teaching. For example, the majority suggested that once a trust relationship has been established between the student and teacher, some tutoring or career counselling might become evident. Personal counselling was also mentioned as being a potential role, one which several participants felt the teacher should be prepared to address. Regarding students who asked teachers for advice, one participant stated, "When you get to know the students well and you know their families, they do come and talk to you about other problems outside of school." But everyone agreed that serious personal problems of the student should be handled, if possible, by the school's guidance counsellors or other professional agencies. In support of this belief came the following statement:

> Well I don't think there is an awful lot of that kind of help that goes on at least that I am aware of. I really very seldom get involved in a situation like that where that comes up, so I don't know if teachers are really prepared to involve themselves in that sort of thing. I don't think it would have a great effect. There are other agencies that are available and accessible for students.

One interviewee from Lorne Jenken expanded upon the previous viewpoints. Although he indicated that he is available to students for personal problems, he felt that most of the students do not perceive this type of activity as a teacher role. He clarified this by saying:

> I don't think that this would happen very often in my situation. I can't really think of any situation where they would come to me for counsel or advice or something because I guess they don't look at me as having that role. My discussions with kids outside of class and outside of school are more along the line of recreational type of activities.

Most of the participants recognized that as teachers, they are often expected to accept other roles. To what depth the teacher is willing to get involved, however, depends on the individual as well as the type of issue at hand. For example, teachers in Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine expressed an interest in helping students with subject and career counselling but few were prepared to get involved with personal problems. If possible, most of the participants felt that serious personal student problems should be directed to other professionals. Discussing the availability of counselling professionals in Fort Assiniboine, one participant stated, "I don't think there is much in Fort Assiniboine in the way of counselling. That sort of help comes from Barrhead."

The Teacher's Extracurricular Involvement

All of the participants agreed that teaching extends beyond the classroom. They strongly believe that teacher involvement outside of the classroom is a vital role. As one teacher explained, "He has to be outgoing and be willing to take some extracurricular clubs, things like that, which would involve outside school hours." Further to this, they perceived this role as promoting student success outside of the classroom, assisting teacher success in the school, as well as community acceptance. Referring to a teacher's extracurricular involvement, one participant went beyond this and suggested, "I don't think that it is necessary for successful teaching. I think it's necessary for successful living in rural communities."

Most of the interviewees emphasized that if senior high teachers were not involved in an extracurricular way in this County, many of the activities would not be available to the youth. Two teachers, formerly from urban settings, emphasized that larger centres normally have agencies which are separate from the school and which are able to offer a wider selection of youth activities. Rural areas, they pointed out, cannot afford to bring in people from the outside to coordinate such activities so it is often viewed by the community

as an expectation of the teacher. A teacher from Lorne Jenken clearly expressed this viewpoint as follows:

> For example, if some of us did not do extracurricular activities that we participate in, those students would have no one to guide them in the extracurricular activities in which they excel or which they like to do. Case in point, if the teachers suddenly decided not to coach basketball anymore or we are not going to teach the students how to curl or we are not going to take them out trap shooting and we are not going to take them out to the golf course, the tennis course can be there as far as we are concerned. They can go and hit the ball by themselves because we are not even going to show them how to hold a racquet properly. Who will? Is the community rich enough that they can afford to get outside help?

Six of the participants are currently involved in youth orientated activities outside of the classroom. They felt extracurricular involvement in and out of school does help promote teacher success in the community. Some of their activities included figure skating, hockey, trapshooting, community theatre, grad ceremonies, 4-H Club, Scouts, the Teen Centre and teaching Catechism at a local church. One Barrhead teacher explained why his extracurricular involvement is important to him:

> I think that interaction with students outside of the classroom is certainly a factor of success. I'm involved in an outdoor education club . . . with the students for example. And that's very satisfying to spend a few weekends tramping the bush with them and seeing them on a different level than in class.

Furthermore, one of the teachers strongly believed that involvement in youth activities enhances the relationships with the students and this feeling often diffuses back into the classroom. She suggested that the time spent in extracurricular activities is perceived by the students and community as an attempt by the teacher to understand, to get along with and enjoy the youth of the community. It is also seen as an opportunity to enhance *student success* outside of the classroom. She elaborated, "It's just that something extra that you can praise a student about and that makes your relationship a little bit closer and then things go a little easier in class."

Three of the teachers stressed, however, that the involvement should not be overextended at the expense of the classroom teaching. When I asked one participant if prospective teachers should be expected to become *really* involved, I obtained the following reply:

> No, no I think their job when they teach school in a community like this one or any small community is teaching. Teaching is more than a full-time job especially the first start, and I think it's unrealistic to demand from beginning

> teachers a kind of total commitment from them in terms of all these different other activities. I think that their energies should be directed towards what it is that they do.

Extracurricular involvements were seen by the participants as being an important teacher role. As many suggested, extracurricular involvement does help rural teachers in getting to know the students better and it also provides the students with different perceptions of their teachers. But as the previous interviewee stated, ". . . it's unrealistic to demand from beginning teachers a kind of total committment." During the interview, he emphasized that new teachers should be expected to perform well in the classroom before they make commitments to a large number of other types of activities.

Involvement in the Community

The majority of the participants suggested that a teacher's community involvement *might not* necessarily involve any students at all. As a result, little benefit would be received by the youth. Only two of the participants are currently involved in community activities such as the Barrhead Arts Club or playing in a local band. All of the participants agreed, however, that community involvement helps new teachers meet the local people. From this standpoint, they felt that the teacher is able to learn and understand the *local* ways of doing things while the community can become familiar with the teacher outside of the school setting. In this regard, one teacher, formerly from an urban setting, made the following comment:

> I think that when you get into a community the only way you are going to get to know that community really well is to go out there and live in it, you are living it. You are living it as an individual who has a teaching job but it is more than living. You have to find out all the different aspects, the different tangents that are involved in that community. Obviously you are not going to be able to get involved in all of them but I am sure that the more that you get involved in, you get a better understanding of what this community is all about. See there is a difference between a person who is going to go out and do something like that than a person who is going to come here and teach and leave at 3:30 or 4:00 and go home, then come back and teach the next day and leave at 4:00 and go home. There is nothing happening and you do this week after week, month after month, you cannot be learning too much. You cannot be increasing your knowledge about the community to any great extent.

Most of the participants advised that this type of involvement is not a direct requirement to teaching success and acceptance. It only assists the teacher in becoming more widely known. To support this belief, one participant shared the following:

> I would not say it is directly. It is certainly a contributing factor. The community objects to people who do not live in the community and come to teach. It seems they want to see the teacher around. They want to see the teachers as a group making contributions, whether it is an ATA contribution, to the Teen Centre or whatever. I would not want to equate success with visibility in the community and organizations.

Further support for this belief is provided in the following comment from a Lorne Jenken teacher:

> I don't know what the community's perspectives are on people that aren't involved, but I think we can't pinpoint teachers in that category. We have people in other professions, other trades that fall in the same areas. Some are involved and some are not, and I don't think that's anything to do with the qualifying success.

But one participant felt that getting involved in the community does help promote a sense of personal contentment in the teacher. Although community involvement won't ensure success, she believed that teachers who are not happy due to their lack of involvement, will probably not remain in the community. She added to this by saying:

> I think it's a benefit, but that's really something that's up to the individual. Some people are community orientated and some are not. And if you're not, then you're not going to feel very happy or fulfilled with what you're doing in the community. You won't be doing any good at all.

Furthermore, one participant commented that *some* community involvement by a teacher is a good thing. But the interviewee warned that the community has a responsibility to ensure that unrealistic demands are not placed upon the teacher. The following quotation illustrated this viewpoint:

> In a small town where you are talking about a small population, I think that would be an expectation because you are getting professional people into your town, and these people certainly have assets. They have things that they do well apart from teaching like an arts teacher or music teacher. They might be for example, people who are good in aerobics so they go out and give courses to the people of the community, swimming, golf, tennis. Perhaps you are a person who likes to help older people and you get involved in that. . . . I think that these people coming in are definite assets to the community and, yes there is a certain amount of expectation. Sometimes it runs overboard though. The community expects too much and they forget that is a human being that they are dealing with.

All of the participants advised that being involved is important. Most commented, however, that senior high teachers in this County should direct their extracurricular efforts towards the students before other types of activities. But as the preceeding interviewee

suggested, new teachers also bring assets to the community which are sometimes outside the student realm. In other words, he believed that these people can make valuable contributions to the community which are founded on personal life experiences.

Summary

All of the teachers interviewed provided an excellent description of the rural senior high teacher in the County of Barrhead #11. They discussed several aspects of teacher success as well as ways in which new teachers can become accepted into their respective communities.

All of the teachers talked about rural values which are important to the people of the community. The participants suggested that new teachers need to be aware of, understand and accept these values. Several participants suggested that living in the community provides new teachers with better opportunities to meet the local people and to become involved. But examples were also provided whereby teachers commuting to County schools have been accepted, but mainly as classroom teachers only.

Similarly, the teachers should not be expected to completely change personally to be accepted. The community also has responsibilities to utilize assets which teachers bring into the community. They also should make them feel welcome.

Although the teacher's main commitment is viewed as classroom teaching, everyone agreed that rural teachers should also be involved in some extracurricular activities. They believe this is an excellent way, outside the classroom, to illustrate to the students a desire to get to know and understand them better. It also promotes student successes, in a different way from the academic side.

Community involvement which does not necessarily include students was viewed by most participants as secondary. They acknowledged these activities as ways of becoming acquainted with the wide spectrum of community groups. They also recognized many teachers possess skills which might add to the local repertoire of activities. But most emphasized that a teacher's main function is to help the youth of the community succeed.

All of the participants advised that teacher approachability is a very important quality. Because teachers tend to be very well known in smaller communities, the participants strongly suggested it is necessary for rural teachers to encourage a friendly relationship with parents and students as well as other community members. This gives the teacher a better perception of where the students are coming from. Conversely, parents understand the teacher's role better. In times of discipline problems, a healthy relationship between the teachers and parents helps to smooth over these situations more quickly. At the same time,

it is important that the students feel comfortable approaching the teacher for extra help or possible counselling.

Teacher recognition, support, and enjoyment with rural students were given as some areas contributing to the teacher's personal satisfaction. The participants suggested that they enjoyed teaching the students in this County and felt good when they were being recognized by the community for their classroom achievements. In addition, professional support in the school was also perceived to be important. This was cited in Barrhead more than Fort Assiniboine, possibly because of the nature of the teaching positions. For example, several teachers at Lorne Jenken instruct the same courses and thus are able to consult with one another or put on in-services to keep current. In contrast, at Fort Assiniboine, usually one teacher taught a particular course discipline. As a result, there were fewer opportunities to participate in support activities similar to those which are experienced at Lorne Jenken.

The amount of teacher flexibility and resourcefulness depended on the size of the school and community. All of the Fort Assiniboine teachers recognized that a smaller school enrollment translated into a smaller school budget and thus fewer teachers are available to handle all of the courses offered. As a result, they felt that new teachers to this community should be prepared to teach many courses, some possibly outside their area of expertise. They described themselves as *generalist teachers* . It was suggested that teachers considering rural posts such as this one, should take a more general education including more minors. They also talked about the necessity of making- do with poor or limited facilities.

Participants from the larger community of Barrhead also gave examples to support a need for teacher resourcefulness and flexibility. However, teachers in this community considered themselves *specialist teachers*. The larger school enrollment and budget enables the school district to hire more teachers to cover the wider range of academic and vocational programs offered. But physical facilities and occasional assignments outside the teacher's expertise were given as examples where the teacher also had to make-do in this school.

All of the interviewees suggested that there is no direct relationship between prior exposure to rural settings and teaching success. Several, however, believed that persons originally from rural settings have a slight immediate advantage in that they will have less personal adjusting to do. But they emphasized that new teachers from urban settings should be willing to make some personal adjustments to the increased visibility, slower pace, fewer people, reduced amenities, and openness of rural life. They stressed that new

teachers capable of doing this will achieve a good level of success and acceptance in their new communities.

The participants talked about teachers' motives for accepting positions in the County of Barrhead. Some of these included a first-time teaching opportunity, a personal preference for rural settings, or using a rural position as a possible *stepping stone* to larger centres. Most of the interviewees discussed various urban attractions which they believe might entice certain teachers. These included a higher salary, a better chance to become specialized, as well as more shopping, dining, and cultural diversity.

Chapter 6
Themes

Introduction

The researcher has identified several categories that appear to be associated with success and acceptance as a teacher in this County. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight several themes including a *range* of participant attitudes or postures which have surfaced from the interview data. Each theme is explained in association with statements made by the respective members of each research group.

Community Awareness

Rural teachers in this County should be well-informed persons. An interesting theme that kept emerging was the importance of teachers recognizing that their personal values and beliefs might be considerably different from those of the community. Most of the participants advised new teachers, and especially urbanites, to become aware of the community and its people. Driving to a local high school, talking to the students, meeting other community groups, student-teaching in the County of Barrhead #11, and visiting a community before accepting a position were offered as suggestions. Several participants further suggested that teachers originally from rural settings have a slight advantage over urbanites coming to this County, in that they are already familiar with rural lifestyles. One Fort Assiniboine teacher reflected upon this viewpoint by saying, "Well . . . I didn't have to adapt a whole lot when I came here, because I had grown up in a small community."

To one teacher participant, becoming aware of the community is knowing where the *lines of acceptance* are within that community. He related this attitude of community awareness in this way: "The community seems to appreciate up to a limit, new and different ideas--new approaches . . . yet there are certainly limits as far as the community is concerned." Further to this, he suggested teachers should be aware of morally sensitive issues presenting possible negative repercusions for certain teachers who get involved. Making reference to a teacher's involvement with such issues, he said:

> Well, it does make headlines with various people. I don't mean it makes headlines in the paper but certainly becomes a very strong factor and I don't think a lot of us would care to have it that way. We'd rather not create a storm even if it is only a tempest in a little teacup.

He further elaborated on this important posture regarding community awareness by sharing the following example of a new curriculum being introduced into Lorne Jenken school:

> There was a lot of fuss a couple of years ago when the new health curriculum came in. The course has been reasonably controversial. It's since died down . . . but there was quite a move and delegation to the school board regarding that curriculum and the people who were going to teach it. I believe the greater concern of those parents . . .was their perception of the morals of those teachers because they felt that they wanted to define who should teach the courses in dealing with morality and, of course, define it in a rather narrow way from their own perspective. So that's the sort of thing that is quite upsetting to the community; others will say, "Forget it, it doesn't really matter" and certainly a lot of teachers will say the same thing . . . but I think we're all quite aware of it and we all feel we'd rather not have that type of negative attention.

In addition, members from both research groups shared a belief that, teachers should become acquainted with the students in this County and recognize that most come from farming backgrounds. Agriculture is important to the economy of this County. Therefore, teachers should understand that certain students must remain home in order to help out on the farm, especially during harvest time. A Fort Assiniboine teacher explained how he reacts to this situation, "I haven't really had much problem with kids staying home helping with the harvesting; they seem to work around it somehow."

Most student participants talked about teacher involvement in various activities as one means to enhance their awareness of the local people and especially the youth. They believed that teachers should select their extracurricular involvement in such a way as to become more acquainted with the students, discover what is important to them, and to provide to the youth opportunities for success outside of the classroom. One student interviewee expanded upon this attitude by saying, "I see some enthusiasm on their part when they're willing to coach a team . . . I think that shows a lot of care and concern for the students, wanting to help them be the best they can at something."

The student interviewees also considered this kind of involvement as being invaluable to a teacher's understanding and knowledge of the child's background. However, the teacher participants emphasized a different posture; they believe that all types of community activities provide excellent opportunities to meet and communicate with diverse groups of people, especially students and parents. This further helps to develop friendships, and to become familiar with the overall rural culture. One teacher reported a variety of ways that have assisted him in learning more about the community:

> I do drama productions, I'm actively involved in the music aspect of the community, I play with a local band here. . . . I help every year with the graduation ceremonies. I help the students with their school plays. If I'm needed in the community area, I do so. . . . I'm always there if they need somebody in the choir.

Therefore, becoming aware of the community is seen as an important aspect of teacher success and acceptance. The participants identified several ways in which incoming teachers can learn about the community, its people and their values. In these ways, teachers can be better equipped to serve a variety of rural demands facing them in this County.

Adaptability

Adaptability emerged as a very important theme in this study. All of the participants suggested ways senior high teachers in this County adjust to their community setting and demonstrate flexibility in their teaching approaches. The attitudes varied considerably among the interviewees.

The participants commented on the necessity for new teachers, especially former urbanites, to adjust to a different kind of lifestyle. References were made to the relaxed, free, close, friendly, and slower-paced rural environment. Former urbanites discussed their adjustments. In most cases, it was the slower-pace, fewer people, and limited cultural or shopping facilities that caused most difficulty in becoming accustomed to rural life. One Lorne Jenken teacher described this common urbanite reaction: " . . . then you come into the rural area and things are slowed dramatically right down to a very slow pace and I think that this is the thing that is most difficult for me to adjust." For these people, a willingness to adjust some of their urban values was necessary. They had to make-do with the available amenities. In addition, one participant talked about personal goals which must sometimes be sacrificed when you live in a rural area, at a distance from a larger centre. For example, she commented about university courses or programs which have to be delayed for the time being.

Interviewees from both research groups also discussed the types of adjustments necessary for teachers who are originally from rural backgrounds. They agreed that these teachers understood the rural culture. Therefore, minimal adjustment was required in this aspect. But several of them suggested the main adjustment was to the teaching assignment. One of them expressed this attitude when referring to his relocation to Barrhead from Fort Assiniboine: "I think it was more adjusting to teaching you know and getting my feet under me and that sort of thing."

All of the participants reported experiences where rural senior high teachers at Fort Assiniboine and Barrhead demonstrated some form of adaptability or flexibility in the classroom. Many participants talked about the diversity of student capabilities, a result of different backgrounds and varying educational aspirations. The students sometimes are placed in common classrooms alongside peers with greater academic capabilities. It was suggested that rural teachers in this County should utilize a variety of teaching methods so that each student remains interested, grasps the fundamentals, and reaches *his or her* potential. For example, one student participant chose science courses to illustrate the issue of teacher adaptiveness in the classroom. She suggested teachers should make these courses as practical as possible and said, "I would think increasing the number of experiments because its incredible how much more you learn by actually seeing it happen." Another student felt that English classes, rather than being too philosophical, should also be made practical and relevant to today's society.

In addition, most participants pointed to situations where the teacher had to improvise. In both school settings, for example, teachers often had to make-do with available resources, such as limited textbooks and lab equipment or physical education working space. Most participants believed this reality is a result of reduced school budgets. A teacher from Fort Assiniboine expressed it this way: "We just have to make do with homemade kinds of things."

Further, depending on the size of the school, teachers are expected to instruct a large variety of courses, some outside their area of expertise. This posture regarding teacher adaptability was especially evident in Fort Assiniboine. All senior high teacher participants at this school consider themselves *generalist* teachers. As one teacher there explained, "You have to handle a large variety of subjects." They suggested the small school enrollment, limited budget, and fewer teachers for the range of programs offered results in them becoming generalists. A Fort Assiniboine instructor elaborated on this notion by saying, "There aren't enough teachers to teach all the different courses. . . . There aren't more teachers because the small number of students doesn't justify the hiring of more teachers." It was also viewed that subject competence is often the result of *experience* rather than training. To compensate, one of these interviewees advised teachers considering positions in areas like Fort Assiniboine should have a general education, possibly with more minors. He expounds, " . . . you know they probably are going to have to have more minors or more of a general education than a more specific one."

Conversely, the student participants from Fort Assiniboine and Lorne Jenken perceived their teachers as specialists, and not generalists. Furthermore, all of the participants at Lorne Jenken viewed the teaching staff as specialists within their discipline.

Some of the teacher participants at Lorne Jenken commented on the larger student enrollment due to consolidation, an increased school budget, and a broad range of programs requiring specialist teachers as reasons for this specialization.

Several participants from both the student and teacher groups suggested that incoming teachers should possess diverse communication skills to assist them in getting to know and understand students, parents, and other community members. This Lorne Jenken teacher described this attitude, how being adaptable and communicative with parents provides benefits in teaching:

> Well, I think . . . you can discuss the children with the parents and because they know you better other than just for what you are in the classroom, they have a better understanding of your role. I think it has helped me over the past to have known a great many of the parents whose children I have been teaching. I think it is very positive.

They felt that new teachers need to remain flexible and open-minded, especially teachers from urban backgrounds. A student described an attitude about how teachers should become more aware: " . . . I think you should be flexible and be able to communicate with everybody. I think that's important." One participant believed teachers from rural backgrounds are better suited to rural students because they already understand local values, and thus can communicate more freely with the people. She reflected on this idea by saying:

> They're more open to ideas and suggestions that the student might have whereas the city person might have their own set of ideas and views on everything. And they're perhaps not as eager to accept new ideas, ones that might even be better than their own, but whereas rural teachers like the ones that I know, are always willing to accept something new. They're willing to incorporate that into the things that they teach . . . and they're always willing to accept the view of this student even if it is different than their own.

But she also talked of urban teachers adjusting to rural students and to the lifestyle. She urges them to be adaptable and remain open-minded, communicative, aware, and friendly. She described this viewpoint of most research group members by saying, "You have to be able to get along with people especially in Barrhead community."

Approachability

Approachability, in several different senses, emerged as a very important theme. Similar to adaptability, the ideas surfacing from this theme vary amongst the interviewees. But, in one way or another and for various reasons, all of the participants shared similar

attitudes that teachers should be approachable, be perceived as a friend, and sincerely care for their students. One participant described approachability as a feeling of comfort by *all* students, parents, and other groups in knowing they can readily approach the teacher as an equal. This Lorne Jenken teacher defined approachability in this way: ". . . he's approachable and willing to go beyond the classroom to assist the child." Most teacher participants viewed their role as making themselves available thereby enhancing student success in or out of the classroom, and encouraging postsecondary endeavours.

To assist each student to reach his or her potential, thereby obtaining success, it was suggested teachers understand the students' background, make themselves available to the students, and spend time talking to the students and parents. Most participants talked about positive relationships already existing between teachers and students. They talked about a feeling of approachability, and teachers wanting to know the students well. One student reflected upon this issue by saying, "Well, I think if you know the individual you're teaching and you know their potential, I think you can teach more efficiently." One Lorne Jenken teacher mentioned how relaxed students and parents feel in phoning him at home to inquire about homework or extra help.

Regarding approachability, a common attitude prevailed amongst the participants whereby teachers are expected to be *visible* participants, accept less privacy, and become known. A Lorne Jenken teacher illustrated this point in this way: ". . . we just don't have private lives as a teacher, so I suppose that ability to interact with the community, commitment to the teaching process beyond the classroom."

Most of the interviewees discussed ways teachers can become available to students. In the classroom, one teacher participant described his easy-going approach, one that encourages many opportunities for communication between himself and the students. He advised that potential discipline problems are more easily diffused when there is a positive understanding between the teacher and students.

Further, spending extra time with the students at noon hour, before or after school, to help with course difficulties or to discuss career choices, was suggested as an example of teacher approachability. One student described how teachers make themselves available to her, "They make an effort . . . I think they like to spend time; if you feel that you need to spend extra time, they're willing to come in early or stay after school. . . ." In addition, one Fort Assiniboine teacher described his efforts as a tutor for students who take French by correspondence by stating, "I do some tutoring, French tutoring as a matter of fact this year because French is not taught here. . . . Students take it by correspondence and then they get stuck with correspondence so they come to me for help."

This teacher was one of several who mentioned their availability to students with personal problems, although most indicated a preference for other professional people to be involved in these types of situations. He clarified this attitude by saying, "Personal counselling should probably be left up to those trained for it. . . .Teachers generally don't have this training." A Lorne Jenken English teacher commented on her efforts to encourage students to produce award-winning publications. She reflected on this idea as follows: "I really want the kids to do well and turn out a publication that's maybe award-winning." This participant further expounded on this issue of approachability: "Some people have failed because they weren't really willing to do as much outside of the nine to five that would make their stay here a little happier, you know clubs and things like that."

Personal Satisfaction

The interviewees suggested different ways teachers achieve personal satisfaction. The enjoyment of the natural surroundings was seen as a positive attraction for teachers in this County. They commented on the closeness of the city, friendliness, slower-pace, and opportunities for hunting and fishing as amenities valued by the teachers and which make it an excellent place to raise families. A Fort Assiniobine teacher summarized similar viewpoints by saying, "The things that I do like about here is the outdoors. I really love canoeing and I've gone the river a number of times--that's the kind of thing that I enjoy about Fort Assiniboine." Most participants emphasized that new teachers should involve themselves in these types of activities in order to fully appreciate the rural lifestyle. Referring to the attractiveness of the area, activities, and potential friendships, a student participant explained how teachers can become involved by giving this advice: "It's up to you to find them."

In addition, members of both research groups suggested the enjoyment of teaching students, observing student success, the overall quality of education being offered in the district, and a personal feeling and recognition of doing a good job as being important to teacher satisfaction. As one teacher participant said, "I appreciate a lot of things including that idea of being significant in people's lives, students' lives and beyond." Regarding teaching satisfaction, one student participant reflected upon this attitude by saying:

> For the most part, they feel very comfortable with the position that they're at or they feel, a lot of them feel just the gratitude of having known students from the beginning of grade 10 personally and seeing them acquire skills to grade 12 and then actually succeeding in university. I think that's very fulfilling for the teachers.

Several participants reviewed the close relationship between teachers and students, and the excellent opportunities for teachers to get to know the students well. One student commented as follows: "It's more of a personal attachment between the students and the teachers." Further, several teacher interviewees at Lorne Jenken expressed personal satisfaction with various kinds of professional growth and support opportunities which are currently being offered to them in the school. One of these participants described this support by saying, "I think we work really well together as a team . . . I think that we're really aware of each other and we're conscious of helping each other, rather than the opposite." Regarding personal satisfaction, teachers at Lorne Jenken obtain support from other sources. One participant illustrated this as follows:

> We're encouraged to find out what's going on and keep up to date with the Department of Education standards with other schools in the Province. We're encouraged to do a little extra in regard to giving inservices in our area of expertise. I think that is good for self-esteem for the teachers.

One teacher participant reported that teachers who find personal contentment and acceptance in rural communities remain longer in the community. "Let's suppose that a teacher is involved in the community, is accepted by the community, then you know he has more confidence in his teaching and that would probably add to his ability to succeed." This Fort Assiniboine interviewee further explained this issue of teacher satisfaction this way:

> Well, I feel that I'm doing a good job now. I know what I'm doing, and I can do what I'm doing well. I enjoy the surroundings, the location. I like being in the outdoors, the forest and I like the river, canoeing and that kind of thing. So I enjoy it here, and I like what I'm doing so when you're contented you don't look for reasons to move.

However, several participants saw the opposite scenario as also being true. They noted that if a personal feeling of dislike for the community setting develops, or non-acceptance by the community is evident, then the teacher will not perform as enthusiastically in the classroom, and the teacher will likely not remain. One teacher interviewee expanded upon this thought by speculating "I'm not happy here. Therefore, I don't want to stay: therefore, I may not give my full potential to the job that I'm doing." It is extremely important that the teacher feels professionally and socially satisfied within the community.

Fitting-In

It is one thing to be capable of meeting community expectations; it is quite another to be willing to meet those expectations. The teacher's personal desire or willingness to serve rural requirements surfaced as an important theme. For example, most members of both research groups expressed the attitude that a teacher's main function is classroom teaching. As one student participant said: "The main thing is that they teach the young people of the community the best they can; . . . that's the important thing on the minds of the community." There is also a preference for the teachers to live in the community as the following interviewee explained, "The community objects to people who don't live in the community; it seems they want the teacher around to . . . as a group making contributions." It is expected that *all* teachers working in this County will assist students to reach their full potentials. Further to this belief, it is felt teachers who commute from urban centres will be accepted as *teacher* s as long as they perform well during school hours. One teacher participant expressed this viewpoint regarding community expectations placed on commuters:

> I don't think it matters that they commute. I think it depends on what happens here, the kinds of reports the kids take home, how the kids like the teacher and then any interaction that takes place through the parents and teachers. I think that's what it depends on, not the commuting.

Both research groups suggested as important, the teachers willingness to make themselves available to students for extra help or some forms of counselling. This was *expected* of the teacher, and it signals one aspect of fitting-in. Consequently, they should become familiar with student backgrounds and get to know the parents. Considering that a wide range of student abilities will be present in the classroom, several participants suggested that teachers should be willing to *individualize* their instruction somewhat so that each student benefits. One student interviewee described a common expectation of teachers working in small rural schools by saying, "It's easier with a small school because you can get a lot more individual attention . . . so they are willing to stay after school or come in and take their lunch hour off . . . if you are having problems."

Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine are smaller communities. Each citizen has excellent opportunities to meet many of the local people. Most participants accepted the attitude that to become fully successful, as a permanent member of the community, the teacher must first be capable of fitting-in to the rural lifestyle. There should be a willingness by the teacher to learn the rural culture and adjust to it. One teacher participant described this

thought by saying, "Wherever I go that's where I make my life, my living; I adjust where I am."

The interviewees suggested that the rural teacher should be well-versed in the communication skills necessary to become acquainted with values of the local farmers, merchants, parents, students, and other teachers. As a result, the teacher should make efforts to become well known in the community. They believe a mutual understanding of each other's roles makes *getting along* easier for the teacher. One participant described how this continuous interaction with students and parents helps him fit-in better:

> I think it comes with knowing a lot of the parents of the students on a fairly close basis to the point where you can sit down and talk to the parents, let alone sit down and talk to the kids . . . so that it's not an interview situation. I think that comes from being reasonably involved in the community. You get to know a lot of people in various situations and I think that helps you.

In the view of two teacher interviewees, fitting-in is a *give and take* relationship. They acknowledged that new teachers should be aware of and understand the rural values. In addition, they suggested that new teachers from urban centres might find it necessary to re-adjust their personal values somewhat to meet the local expectations. However, they also made the point that the community has responsibilities to the incoming teacher, to accept and help him or her adjust to the community. One teacher participant summarized this matter of fitting-in as follows:

> I also believe that the community or those that you work with also have a responsibility to also share in this type of thing so that there's a give and take on both sides so that a person can really find themselves assimilating in the community. It wasn't all work on one side.

All members of each research group share the attitude that rural teachers are expected by the community to become involved in a *reasonable* amount of extracurricular activities. One teacher participant described the community pressure placed on him to become involved in these types of activities:

> Well, like service clubs for example. Our teachers have done very, very well and used a lot of energy in those kinds of things, and some of us, including myself, who haven't been a member of a service club are perhaps justified in the community's view because of the time we spend on school affairs but yet there's a certain . . . pressure that we should be.

However, all student interviewees expected that a teacher's commitment to the community should involve and benefit students, and that such activities should have a

higher priority for teachers than other community activities or groups which lie outside the student realm. One student described this position as follows: "I think school involvement is vital, community not as important." However, all the interviewees--both students and teachers--concurred that activities involving students do demonstrate a teacher's commitment of personal time and this often leads to a more comfortable relationship in the classroom. One student participant expressed this view: "When they are involved in the extracurricular activities, they get to know the individual on a more personal basis, and that definitely helps in the teaching." In addition, they believe it demonstrates a teacher's desire to promote student success outside of the classroom. One student interviewee said, "I think that shows a lot of care and concern for the students, wanting to help them be the best they can at something." And most agreed that many of the student activities exist because of a teacher's commitment to them. One teacher participant described this community expectation as follows:

> I think a successful person in rural Alberta is going to be involved in his community because if you aren't involved you don't have a community, whether it's teaching or anything else. I think teachers are looked upon in rural communities because they represent usually a large body of people, a pool of people. They're expected to do certain kinds of things and a lot of what goes on in a smaller community functions around the school. . . . Almost everything we have essentially grows from the school or anything that involves young people has to grow from the school, so that teachers are involved one way or another. . . . We need to have people in rural Alberta who have that kind of vision, who are able to commit the time and who see themselves as people who in effect need to contribute to the community in order for that community to grow and sustain itself.

Therefore, fitting-in is accomplished in many ways. To fit-in, many interviewees emphasized teachers should determine what the members of various groups in the community expect and then make efforts to adjust. For example, teachers coming from urban centres might be expected to adjust some of their personal values to fit better with the rural lifestyle in this County. Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine comprise fewer people, are slower-paced, and have limited facilities compared to larger centres such as Edmonton. Most participants suggested the teacher is expected to accept the lifestyle as it is. In addition, the interviewees emphasized that by becoming involved with student success in and out of the classroom, communicating openly with other groups, and obtaining community acceptance firsthand, fitting-in is made easier for the teacher.

Summary

The six grade 12 rural students and seven rural senior high teachers reported information about success and acceptance of rural teachers. When these data were interpreted, themes emerged. Most of the participants held similar viewpoints relating to these themes. However, there were some differences. For example, students consider their teachers as specialists whereas only the Lorne Jenken teachers felt this way. In contrast, the Fort Assiniboine teachers viewed their role as generalists, responsible for a wide variety of subjects. Teachers at Lorne Jenken also talked about professional support in the school, whereas there was no discussion on this topic at Fort Assiniboine.

Further, there were some differences between the expectations of urbanites and teachers originally from rural settings. A few participants felt that persons with rural backgrounds cope better in rural environments. However, most suggested urbanites also can adjust and contribute to rural students and the community. Therefore, previous exposure to rural settings was mainly viewed as making an adjustment to the rural culture easier for certain teachers, and not whether a teacher would be more successful. In addition, some participants felt the community expects its teachers to live in the community rather than commuting, whereas others advised the community's main expectation of teachers is to provide good instruction.

The students viewed a teacher's community role as assisting the youth. This involved extracurricular activities associated with school and also various community activities such as 4-H or the Rodeo Club. Conversely, most teachers viewed their community role more broadly. They perceived their involvement in community activities as a way to become acquainted with many groups of people, including students and parents. Activities outside of the student realm included playing in a local band or singing in a community choir.

Chapter 7
Summary, Reflections, and Implications

Introduction

This chapter is divided into several sections. First, I will briefly summarize the purpose and methodology of this research, as well as the major findings of the study. Second, personal reflections emerging from the data and the implications relating to success and acceptance for rural senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead #11 will be outlined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what grade 12 students and senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead consider important for teacher success and acceptance in this rural setting. A literature review assisted the researcher in identifying the major guideposts for further investigation of this topic. Based on the interview data, various interpretations of the findings were presented which taken together serve as a comprehensive response to the problem statement.

Methodology

This research was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. The object of the study was to obtain a better *understanding* of the problem statement. It was not intended as a vehicle to make broad generalizations or to formulate judgements or recommendations. As a result, it was understood from the outset that these findings would be applicable to this County only.

Further, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were felt to be the best research tool for the purposes of this study. The interview and follow-up procedures allowed for ongoing contact between the researcher and the various participants. In this way, it was possible to constantly monitor the data for the *intent of meaning*.

Data analysis was an *ongoing* process. Interview transcripts and a daily diary formed the basis of the inquiry. Using content analysis, the respective transcripts were analyzed for common categories, namely specific issues important to each target-group. Member checks were utilized to offer the interviewees opportunities to discuss and verify

the accuracy of their transcripts and, if necessary, to make alterations. These follow-up interviews enabled the participants to ask additional questions and to provide further input.

Furthermore, a list of categories for each group was distributed to all participants. They were requested to read over the document, comment on the accuracy of the interpretations, and then return their document to the researcher. The document was placed inside an envelope and sealed. The researcher picked up the envelopes from the participants at the respective school sites.

Finally, emerging from the analysis were several tentative themes, i.e. broad-based issues important to all of the participants. These tentative themes were verified with the participants either at the school site or through telephone conversations. At this time, further suggestions were encouraged.

Major Findings

Student and teacher participants provided descriptive perceptions of what they considered important to teaching success and acceptance for senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead #11. Many of the teacher participants offered advice to new teachers, especially regarding situations they personally experienced when coming to the communities in which they were now teaching.

All of the students and teachers talked about various forms of teacher adaptability and flexibility. Interviewees from both schools commented on limited equipment or outdated textbooks and how these situations often force teachers to improvise or adjust their teaching strategies. In addition, they discussed the likelihood that new teachers, especially urbanites, would need to adjust their personal values before experiencing satisfaction and acceptance in the community. Former urbanites found most difficulty adapting to such conditions as the slower-pace, fewer people, and limited shopping or cultural facilities. Teachers originally from rural settings also had to make adjustments. Although the rural lifestyle was not considered a problem, they had to adjust to new teaching assignments.

It was discovered in this study that teacher participants born in rural settings preferred to remain in rural areas. Furthermore, they suggested that teachers considering a position in a rural setting should become familiar with that community and the teaching assignments before accepting the position.

However, the dominant attitude was that teachers in *small rural* communities such as Fort Assiniboine should be prepared to teach a wide variety of subject areas. No mention was made regarding split-grade classrooms. Some of the courses might be outside the teacher's area of expertise. Teachers expressed the view that competence in these subjects is often a result of *experience* rather than training. It was advised that prospective teachers

possess a more general education, rather than expecting to be in a specialist role. Interestingly enough, all student participants perceived their teachers as specialists, whereas only the Lorne Jenken teacher interviewees had a similar perception.

With higher school enrollments such as at Lorne Jenken High School in Barrhead, additional finances become available to provide a broader range of courses and programs. Several specialist teachers are often required to instruct a particular discipline. As a result, teachers in this school enjoy a level of collegial and professional support which is not evident at the smaller school of Fort Assiniboine.

All of the participants reflected upon a teacher's awareness of, and respect for, specific rural values. Sensitive moral issues and student obligations during harvest time were given as examples. It was emphasized that rural teachers must know what the community expectations are, and where the *fine line* between acceptance and rejection lies. Moreover, teachers are expected to provide good classroom instruction, to live in the community rather than commute, and to be involved in extracurricular activities. However, several participants insisted that teachers, especially first-year employees, not overextend their involvement at the expense of their teaching.

All of the student participants viewed a teacher's involvement with extracurricular activities as opportunities to interact with and enhance the success of the community's young people. Scouts, 4-H Club, and coaching were examples given to support this view. However, most teachers felt that all kinds of community activities, involving adults as well as students, were important. Coaching, playing in a local band, and helping out with the Barrhead Arts Centre were examples given as ways to meet different groups in the community.

Interviewees from Barrhead and Fort Assiniboine emphasized the importance of accepting a reduced level of anonymity. Teachers should meet as many of the community groups as possible to enhance their awareness and understanding of these people. A common viewpoint amongst the participants was that increased visibility and approachability in relation to students and parents often lead to better teacher success in the classroom. Most participants commented that teachers communicating with students on a personal and equal level, offering extra help outside the regular school hours, and being available for various types of counselling and tutoring demonstrated teacher approachability.

All of the participants elaborated upon ways teachers obtain personal satisfaction in this County. Many viewed a personal involvement and appreciation of the natural surroundings as an important feature of rural life. In addition, teachers enjoyed their profession, being with rural students, meeting members of other community groups, and

having close social relationships. Moreover, they enjoyed the relative closeness of a larger centre, namely Edmonton. It was suggested teachers who feel personal satisfaction have minimal need to relocate to larger centres. Only one of the participants talked about accepting a future teaching position in an urban centre. This Fort Assiniboine teacher explained that he would like to try a specialized position, and that large urban centres have many more specialist opportunities than Barrhead. No participants talked about moving to the city for professional advancements such as administrative positions.

Personal Reflections

When the findings reported in the research literature regarding the success and acceptance experienced by rural teachers are compared with the findings gathered in this case study in the County of Barrhead #11, similarities are noted. No new major discoveries were made. However, some discrepancies were found. They are outlined below and explained in terms of the context of the respective school sites.

Multigrade Classrooms

The related literature describes several studies where teachers in small rural schools become responsible for multigrade classrooms. For example, Youngberg (1986) conducted research in rural British Columbia. As previously stated, "Multigraded classrooms were common in both Prespatou and Buick Creek in most subject areas, but at Clearview they were necessary only in specialty subjects" (p. 80).

Strangely enough, especially in Fort Assiniboine, no mention was made of split-grade classrooms during the interviews. After additional member checking with the participants, the researcher is able to conclude that multigrade classrooms do exist in Fort Assiniboine. As one interviewee stated, "Yes, I teach split grades in the same classroom .... I teach Math 10/13, 20/23, and 30/33." In response to the question, Do the teachers have split-grades in senior high?, the Fort Assiniboine student replied, "Yes." Considering that the teachers here regard themselves as generalists, and their teaching assignments seem to support this, I conducted an additional member check with the Fort Assiniboine participants. As one interviewee emphasized, split-grades are a reality. Considering that the teachers at this school consider themselves generalist instructors, and that one of them has 15 subject preparations, it is not too surprising that split-grades do exist. On the other hand, no multi-grade classrooms exist at Lorne Jenken High School. The teachers are specialists with only 3 or 4 subjects to prepare for.

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individualize instruction (p. 5). However, an extensive search of the available literature failed to identify similar programs in rural Alberta.

In addition, this case study in the County of Barrhead #11 did not reveal any kinds of existing or proposed rural practicum programs. Considering that Fort Assiniboine and Barrhead are within reasonable driving distance of Edmonton, and geographic isolation is minimal, the findings are not really surprising. And only the senior high school in Fort Assiniboine can be considered less specialized than Lorne Jenken Senior High in its teaching assignments. For example, one teacher in this school has 15 different subject preparations. Possibly it is felt that special rural programs for this County are not justified and too expensive.

Perhaps the Department of Education is planning such programs. On the other hand, they may not feel the immediate necessity for such massive government schemes, especially when more people appear to be relocating to urban centres in Alberta. The University of Alberta and other universities, in their Bachelor of Education programs, do provide opportunities for students to take practicums in rural settings. And, some of these student teachers have come to the County of Barrhead.

School as the Centre of the Community

Several authors discussed the notion that small, remote rural schools often become the centre of the community, and the *teacher* plays integral roles in the various community activities. This is especially true around Christmas. As Swanson (1984) wrote, "One of the most difficult chores for the rural teacher was special programs marking the Yuletide or other holidays" (p. 3). However, it should be emphasized that this illustration related to one-room school houses during 1825 to 1984.

None of the participants talked about this type of scenario occurring in Barrhead or Fort Assiniboine. After further member checking, one Fort Assiniboine teacher said, "No, it's not like the old days. . . . The school handles some family dances, sports, and Christmas concerts." Considering that Lorne Jenken and Fort Assiniboine are not one-room school houses, the discrepancy was not too revealing. There are many more teachers available to help out with various community events rather than one teacher becoming the sole organizer.

Moving to the City

Lewis & Edington (1983) suggested that "many of the teachers who left the district wanted counseling or administrative positions that were not as abundant in the rural districts" (p. 8). None of the participants in the County of Barrhead felt an *immediate* need

to relocate to the city for these types of positions. Only one Fort Assiniboine teacher indicated that he might want to relocate to Edmonton because there were more specialist positions available in the city than in Barrhead. Otherwise, all of the teacher participants were content to remain in their present settings. The Lorne Jenken teachers talked of opportunities for professional growth within the school. In addition, several of them transferred to the senior high from within the County of Barrhead school system. It seems there are adequate professional opportunities for them. Further, most of the teachers talked about an enjoyment of the natural surroundings as well as other rural amenities which contribute to their personal satisfaction and their intention to remain in these communities. For now, they are happy. Perhaps in the future, some *might* find a need or necessity to relocate to urban centres for personal opportunities.

A Final Reflection

Although this study identified many features contributing to success and acceptance of rural senior high teachers in the County of Barrhead, these qualities might not be unique to this rural area or to any rural area. Many of the features might also be seen in urban schools. The researcher does not know and assumptions cannot be made. The purpose of this study was to gather student and teacher perceptions of what is considered important to teacher success and acceptance within *this* County. The findings reflect these opinions!

Implications

The literature review provoked many thoughts regarding success and acceptance of rural teachers. Furthermore, the research findings have supported many of the ideas presented in the literature. Therefore, it seems appropriate to reflect upon, and make suggestions for prospective teachers, administrators, and further research.

For the Teacher

The review of literature and research findings clearly suggest that teachers considering a career in small rural communities will most likely be responsible for a large variety of courses and multigrade classrooms. If prospective teachers are specialist-trained, then they might want to reconsider these types of teaching posts, unless they are willing to make personal adjustments. Perhaps prospective teachers considering generalist positions might seek a more general education in their university studies. Making reference to the nature of university courses, one participant reflected, " . . . possibly with more minors."

Further to the above, urban teachers considering rural settings in the future might want to become more knowledgeable about rural life. Visiting different rural communities, talking to students and other rural groups, and investigating the available resources would all be worthwhile activities for a person interested in a rural teaching career. One participant suggested teachers still in university request rural practicum posts. It seems logical that a first-hand awareness and understanding of rural life would forestall discontent later!

For Administrators

Both this research study and review of literature emphasized the importance of teacher satisfaction and prior exposure to rural settings for success. If teachers had some previous knowledge of the teaching assignment, the school and community setting before accepting a rural position, then adjustment may prove to be easier. Perhaps this would lead to increased personal satisfaction.

The researcher suggests central office administrators might consider absorbing the costs of a two or three day *rural orientation* for prospective senior high teachers to this County. This would assist these teachers, especially urbanites, to venture out and meet some of the community groups. It would give them a feeling of rural life, and possibly some of the expectations. Further, teachers could visit the community where the position is located, and assess the school climate, resources, and teaching assignment. This would afford opportunities to determine one's capabilities or willingness to become committed to that community.

In the final outcome, it might save County administrators money. The orientation program would enable prospective candidates to decline positions when they have personal doubts about the teaching assignment or adjustment to the community.

For Further Research

Both senior high schools in this County were included in this study. As indicated earlier, the research findings from this study are relevant only to this County. In addition, the nature of the study was one of descriptive analysis and understanding rather than prescription. Therefore, the researcher must be cautious in applying these findings to other rural areas. Therefore, further research is necessary to determine whether teacher success and acceptance in adjacent rural counties is influenced by considerations similar to those found in this study. The researcher encourages other inquirers to conduct research so that a broader picture on this topic can be achieved. Perhaps, as additional data are uncovered,

comparisons might be made to learn about similarities and differences regarding teacher success and acceptance in the respective rural settings.

For the Researcher

I have taught in rural settings for most of my teaching career. This has included teaching posts in Hay River, N.W.T., Dawson City, Yukon, and Okotoks, Alberta. Based on administrative reports and community comments, these teaching ventures would be considered by most standards as successful experiences. However, I do not consciously recollect thinking very much about the issues of approachability or adaptability. What it really came down to was "you liked it or you didn't." However, I believe this research has increased my overall knowledge regarding rural teaching, and it should provide further refinement of my teaching skills in this County.

Conclusion

This thesis has presented an abundance of ideas regarding success and acceptance of senior high teachers working in the County of Barrhead #11. Emerging from these data were several broad issues. Prospective rural teachers might find interest in the findings on approachability, adaptability, or fitting-in. As they browse through the information, they might be asking themselves questions such as these: "Am I really capable of meeting and conversing with all those community groups?" More importantly, "Am I willing to do it?" I belive it is important to ponder these questions.

Is the decision to relocate to this County really that complex? Perhaps, before analyzing these issues further, prospective teachers might want to consider a more simple question. Or is it really that simple, after all? Ask yourself, "Do I want this position purely because it is the *only* position available to me now, or do I want this position for my personal fulfilment?" Identify those reasons! Only the individual knows for certain what his or her personal *motives* are. Yet, it seems reasonable that the person should answer this underlying question before assessing his or her capability or willingness to satisfy the many community expectations which he or she will face. It is with sincere hope that these research findings will be enlightening and valuable to those teachers who truly want to call this County home!

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Appendix A

Correspondence

Robert N. Miller
Box 971
Barrhead, Alberta
TOG OEO
April 10, 1989

(403) 674-6328

Dear _____

I want to personally thank you for your voluntary participation in this thesis study. I am presently enrolled at the University of Alberta in the Master of Educational Administration program. The research is in partial fulfilment of this degree. Please allow me a few moments to explain the purpose and nature of the research.

This is an exploratory project to derive information concerning the key factors which are associated with successful rural senior high teaching. The study is not one of evaluation to make recommendations for change but rather one to identify and hopefully obtain a better understanding of these key factors. Your input is greatly valued to the successful completion of the study.

Please consider the following:

1. Although you have made an initial commitment to this research, I would like you to fully understand that you are under no obligation to continue to completion if you decide not to.

2. In addition, I want to assure to you that the information which you provide will be held strictly confidential and that your identity will remain anonymous.

3. I will make further contact with you to determine mutually agreed dates and times for the initial and any subsequent interviews.

2.....

4. All participants, please read and sign the *attached letter of consent form*. If you are a student participant, the ethical guidelines at the University of Alberta insist that you must have your parent(s) or guardian(s) sign in place of you. No interviews will be conducted until all of the letters of consent are signed. Please forward, as soon as possible, the letters of consent forms to:

Robert N. Miller
Box 971
Barrhead, Alberta
TOG OEO

Again, I sincerely appreciate your voluntary participation. I look forward to meeting with you. If you require further clarification of the above, please phone me at 674-6328.

Sincerely,

Robert N. Miller

Letter of Consent

Re: Key Factors Associated With Successful Rural Teaching

I, the undersigned voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that I am under no obligation to continue my participation to completion of the study. In addition, I have been ensured that the information provided for this study by me will be completely confidential and that my identity will remain anonymous.

It is also understood that if I am a high school student participant that the ethical guidelines at the University of Alberta insist that my parent(s) or guardian will sign in my place.

Authorized Signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix B

Teacher and Student Interview Guides

General Interview Guide (SAMPLE ONLY)

Teacher Interview Questions

Introduction and Ethical Considerations

1. Explain to the interviewee the significance of his/her information for this study.

2. Describe the study. I am interested in studying the factors which contribute to the success of senior high school teaching in a rural setting.

3. Tell the interviewee that his/her identity will remain anonymous and that the information will remain totally confidential.

4. Request permission to use note-taking and to record the information on audiotape.

5. Advise the interviewee that the interview can be stopped at any time.

Questions are based on the *Identified Guideposts* from the Literature Review

Part 1: Background Information

(a) How long have you taught at *Lorne Jenkin Senior High?* (*Fort Assiniboine school?*)

(b) Could you please describe your current teaching assignment?

(c) Have there been major changes in your teaching assignment during your time at Lorne Jenkin Senior High? (*Fort Assiniboine school?*)

Part 2: Personal Satisfaction with Rural Settings

(a) What are the factors that attracted you to apply for and take a teaching position at this school?

(b) Was this a preferred location for you to teach?

Part 3: Personal Exposure with Rural Settings

Did you grow up in a rural area?

(a) If so, was the experience of rural life such a positive one that you wanted to return or continue to live in a rural area?

(b) If not, did you find the process of adjustment to a rural setting difficult?

(i) Would you please describe the setting where you grew up?

(ii) Was the prospect(s) of living in a rural area why you chose *Barrhead (Fort Assiniboine)* as a teaching position?

(iii) What factors helped or hindered you in this adjustment?

Part 4: Key factors leading to Rural Success

Are there any special circumstances of teaching in a rural setting which are different than in a large, urban school?

(a) If so, what are they?

Part 5: The Teacher as an Involved Member of the Community

(a) How actively are you involved in community life in *Barrhead?* (in *Fort Assiniboine?*)

(b) Do you think it's important for success for teachers to be actively involved in community life?

Part 6: Personal Satisfaction with Rural Settings

What factors contribute to your satisfaction in this school?

(a) If the opportunity presented itself, would you rather teach in an urban school?

(b) What would be the factors that would attract you to go to an urban setting?

Part 7: Delivery of Instruction/Flexibility and Resourcefulness/Involved Member of the Community/Personal Exposure/Personal Satisfaction

(a) If you were hiring teachers for this school, what characteristics would you look for to increase the likelihood that the teacher would be successful in this setting?

(b) Over the years, you may have had as colleagues in this school teachers who were <u>not</u> successful. What factors would account for their lack of success?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW ONLY

General Interview Guide (SAMPLE ONLY)

Student Interview Questions

Introduction and Ethical Considerations

1. Explain to the student the significance of his/her information for this study.

2. Describe the study. I am interested in studying the factors which contribute to the success of senior high school teaching in a rural setting.

3. Tell the student that his/her identity will remain anonymous and that the information will remain totally confidential. Explain how.

4. Request permission to use note-taking and to record the information on audiotape.

5. Written consent will have been obtained for the student to participate in the study.

6. Advise the student that the interview can be stopped at any time.

Questions are based on the *Identified Guideposts* from the Literature Review

Part 1: Background Information

(a) How long have you been a student at *Lorne Jenkin Senior High?* (in Fort Assiniboine?)

(b) Could you please tell me about some of the things that makes *student life* exciting for you in this school setting?

Part 2: Key Factors leading to Rural Teaching Success

(a) Please think of some of the good teachers that have taught you in the past and present. What was it about these teachers that made them *good teachers?*

(b) Perhaps you have had teachers who you felt were not as effective. Could you try to explain why you felt that they were not as effective as the good teachers you have described?

Part 3: Flexibility and Resourcefulness

(a) Is there anything special about teaching in a small town or rural setting that makes special demands on your teachers that they might not face in a city school?

Part 4: Personal Satisfaction with Rural Schools

(a) Do you think that the senior high teachers in this school enjoy teaching here?

(i) If so, what are some things that make the teacher(s) happy to be here in Barrhead (*Fort Assiniboine?)*

(ii) *If not,* what are some things that might make the teacher(s) wish that they could be somewhere else?

(b) What are some of the most important things about the senior high teachers in this school that make you pleased about being a student here in Barrhead (*Fort Assiniboine?*)

Part 5: Personal Exposure with Rural Settings

Did you grow up in a rural area?

(a) If so, what are some of the things about rural life that most appeal or do not appeal to you as a student?

(i) How important is it to you as a student that the teachers in this school are also from rural areas?

(b) If not, when you moved here, did you find it difficult to adjust to this rural setting?

(i) Would you please describe the setting where you did grow up?

(ii) What were some of the different kinds of adjustments that you had to make when you came to this school?

(c) What advice would you offer to a new teacher from a city to help him/her adjust to the new setting?

Part 6: The Teacher as an Involved Member of the Community

(a) How involved in this community are the teachers that you consider good teachers?

(b) Does their community involvement differ from the teachers who you think are not as good?

(i) If so, in [redacted]ays?

(c) How important is it to you that your teachers in Barrhead (*Fort Assiniboine*) are involved members of the community?

(i) If important, in what ways should they be involved?

Part 7: Personal Satisfaction with Rural Settings

(a) What are the factors about living in this school and community that are attractive to the teachers?

Part 8: Key factors

If you had the opportunity to choose the *perfect teacher* for this school and community, what would you consider to be the most important characteristics of that person?

Appendix C

A Typical Teacher and Student Transcript

T LJHS 01

Today is April the 25th, Monday and to the today is the first of the interviews for the thesis called Teaching Success and Acceptance in Rural Settings. The first interviewee is a teacher at Lorne Jenkin High School. She will be coming in at 9:00 this morning April the 25th.

I'd like to thank you for coming in this morning and I think we'll go ahead with the interview right away. First of all there's a couple of things I'd like to explain to you, first of all I want to make sure that the --- it's okay to use the information on ____tape--

Right

---and also if I write some notes down in my little note book. I really appreciate you coming in to give this information. The information that you provide is very significant to this study, and the study of course is ---I am interested in studying the factors ---the key factors which contribute to the success of the rural teacher in rural studies. A very important aspect of this interview is that all the information will remain confidential and your identity will remain anonymous and that's why I'm not using your first name or your name at all. In addition as the interview progresses if there's something that you don't want to say or you feel compelled that you want to be stopped at anytime you can request that and it will be stopped immediately.

All right.

Are we ready to go?

We're ready.

Okay super! The interview questions are kind of divided into several sections and I'm going to start off with the first section which is background information on yourself---a little bit. How long have you taught at Lorne Jenkin High School?

This is my 14th year.

14th year?

Yeh.

Okay---could you please describe your current teaching assignment?

I teach only English in grades 11 and 12, both streams, general and Matriculation.

And have there been any major changes in your teaching assignment during your time at Lorne Jenkin High School?

Several times.

Can you give us some examples of that?

When I first came here we were on the traditional English 10, 20 , 30, 23 ---13, 23, 33 and after two years we decided that we go for the module system, to try and increase the amount of English and exposure to literature and language that the students would have, so we worked up some modules and I think we had those going for about 3 or 4 years, and then we made a switch back again because of the departments standards and things like that, to the 10, 20, 30, 13, 23, 33 again, I guess because the diploma exams coming in, and we tend to change things a lot in the English department. I don't know if English teachers tend to work closer together or what but we like to be current with what we're doing, we like to be together very much so we're always changing.

Okay---super! So you feel that that is maybe more in the English department than it might be in the Science department.

I'm not sure, but I know we have more meetings, we are always doing things to upgrade. We have common exams. I don't think Science departments have that ?

What are the factors that attracted you to apply for and take a teaching position at this school?

Oh okay---this is going to be a little strange. I 'm from Nova Scotia and I wanted to suppose see the world while I taught so I answered an ad in one of our local papers at

home and got the job, and I always figured if I didn't like it here I could always go home, but I obviously liked it here.

Was this a preferred location for you to teach?

No it wasn't, I thought I wanted to go to [redacted].

When you found out that you had this position in this school were really quite happy about it?

Yes I was really excited. I tried to get a girlfriend to come out here with me too.

Did you grow up in a rural area?

I grew up in the country, but we had a town on one side and a city on the other, so we were like 2 miles from the city and about 10 miles from the next little town---that's sort of thing so I kind of think of myself as a small city person.

Small city person and not a rural person?

No not really.

Did you find the process of adjustment to a rural community difficult?

No I was really surprised I went to rural universities and I guess in the university towns people don't really care that much for the students because they tend to be a little wild and crazy, but when I came to Barrhead expecting the same reaction from the public I was shocked because the first few days I think 3 days here the merchants downtown were talking to me and once we started working at the school everybody was really helpful and making sure that the new people were involved and really felt that they belonged here, so I think Barrhead is just a really great town for new people.

Would you please describe the setting again where you grew up?

Ahh--okay, it's Crepe Breton County it's coal mining and steel are the 2 major industries. We took a bus to our school---well we had a little school just up until about grade 8 and we just were able to walk to, and we were bused from grades 8 through I left school after 11 and went to university early, and that about six miles---10 miles tops but most of our shopping most of our socializing was done in Sydney the small city.

Was the prospect of living in a rural area why you chose Barrhead as a teaching assignment?

Not really---when I informed that I had the job I didn't come out for an interview or anything, I was hired through my application and information from the university. I asked the superintendent what Barrhead was like and I asked him you know what the major industries were, I asked how close it was to Edmonton, because I wanted to make sure that if there wasn't very much going on, I'd at least be able to go into the city and suppose go to a play once in a while and a movie once in a while that sort of thing.

You mentioned about the merchants in Barrhead when you first came here. What factors maybe external to those helped or hindered you to make the adjustment when you came here?

Okay--it was a little difficult at the beginning because I came up early to get myself an apartment and at that time there were none in Barrhead, everything ---I think there were 2 buildings and they were all taken up, so I had to board in a private home for a month and I'd never done that before so that was a little different, but again the ---my landlady was super. I found it a little strange because she said that she never locked her door and if I should come home and the door somehow got locked she showed that she kept a key up on the outside of the house, so that to me was weird. Nobody in Barrhead knew addresses they just would say well they live over near this person or that person and if you want to find out where everybody is you just drive around and see where the car---that person's car is and then you just go in or whatever, so that was a little strange. I didn't have a vehicle so---but at least the buses came here so I could go into Edmonton once in awhile. I really felt disadvantaged because of the public library and their facility here at the time. I really would have preferred being closer to Edmonton Public library or the University library that's what I was used to, so there's one disadvantage--

Do you ---you were basically talking when you first came here which related to the question. How do you see that now? Do you see any changes that have taken place in terms of factors, those factors you mentioned are they still prevalent today for say a teacher coming in?

Now there's a lot more accommodation now. The library definitely is better now than it used to be, but still you know it's nice to be able to have to access to more, but I think teachers have access to an incredible amount of resources through the media center that's really been built up since I got here, and have we have more machines now and media equipment than we used to have and that's definitely an improvement.

Are there any special circumstances of teaching in a rural setting which are different than in a large urban school?

That's a little difficult for me to say. I think Barrhead has a tremendous amount of courses available to the kids. We've got the vocational wings, vocational programs so I don't think our kids suffer like some other rural schools that don't have all that, and we're close enough to the city so that if we want to take the kids in on a field trip or something like that we could, but on the other hand our kids don't have very many places at lunch hour and on their breaks to go and get into trouble like the malls and things like that, and I think our kids are from what I've heard a lot better behaved than city kids, our kids still drink and I think there's you know a little bit of drugs going around and stuff, but I think for the most part they're very well behaved.

Can you think of any other circumstances that might place this school or setting different from the urban setting and an urban school?

Well I guess if you're talking about disadvantages every once in a while it's difficult when you try to take a field trip because usually we have to be back by 3:30 so that the bus students can get home, if ---it's just involving kids from Swan Hills that's not really a problem because they can take the Greyhound up there, but the kids who live on farms and have to have someone come in and pick them up if we don't get home til 7:00 o'clock, or if we want to go in and see a play in the evening that's really difficult, you know because they have to be met here at the school and stuff like that, so there's a disadvantage.

How actively are you involved in community life in Barrhead?

I've slowed down now, because I have 2 children they're a little bit more demanding, I took part in community theater, I used to curl, now I'm a hockey mother so I get into that. My daughter's in dancing so I car pool it, I'm involved with the church, I teach catechism every Tuesday, things like that so I still do some community things but not as much as I used to.

Do you think it's important for success for teachers to be actively involved in community life?

I think it's a benefit, but that's really something that's up to the individual, some people are community oriented and some are not, and if you're not then you're not going to feel very happy or fulfilled with what you're doing in the community you won't be doing any good at all.

You mentioned that it was a benefit. Can you give us some examples?

It's nice to know if ---like for example if your students play hockey that they really enjoy it you know and some times if they don't have their homework done and they were out on a road trip or something if you know that you can go a little easier on them and be a little more understanding. If you don't know that then you might tend to come down really hard on them and that sort of thing.

Do you feel that say new teachers that are coming in should be aware of that situation?

Well I am sympathetic to new teachers because they've got a lot of work to do. The first two years of teaching I think you're pretty well swamped, it's a nice idea if they have a little bit of time to get out a little bit you know and see whose in the plays and who's curling you know on the student curling team and stuff like that. It's just something extra that you can praise a student about and that makes your relationship a little bit closer and then things just go a little easier in class.

What factors contribute to your satisfaction in this school?

Holy! I think we've got really good teachers here. I think we work really well together as a team, we could improve definitely, but I think that we're really aware of each other and we're conscious of helping each other rather than you know the opposite. The students are really good, we generally get support for anything new that we want to try, we're encouraged to always be on top of things. We're encouraged to find out what's going on and keep up to date with the Department of Education standards with other schools in the Province. We're encouraged to do a little extra in regard to giving inservice to you know in our area of expertise, I think that is good for self-esteem for the teachers---off the top of my head I think that's it I don't know if there might be more.

If you can think of any others as we go along you know just feel free to mention them. What factors ---- what would be the factors that would attract you to go to an urban school?

I suppose little things like extra benefits, I've heard that some city teachers have in the English area have a prep a day, that would be heaven, we can't afford that out here we're kind of poor.

Maybe you could just expand on that word poor---what do you mean by poor?

Well we don't have as many dollars to support a large bank of teachers that you have to have if you're going give your teachers a prep a day and that sort of thing.

Do you get a prep a day?

Only in one semester, because I teach only five credit courses you know and that's a personal choice because I really love English and I would feel insecure in another area, but of course if I teach the 5 credit then I'm doing myself out of you know a prep every second day and that sort of thing.

So you get a prep in the first semester?

Second semester---

and no preps in the first semester---

Right.

Can you think of any other possible factors that might be attractive in an urban school for yourself?

For me personally---I guess going out into the public a little bit more like I've always noticed in the paper that they're having an author do some readings at the University or authors signing books at a bookstore, and I thought gee it would be great to take the kids there, but it's---the hours are always inconvenient, but if I was in the city I think I'd probably drag them all over. I think it would be easier for me to think about upgrading my own background if I'm close to the University I would take maybe a night course or something like that whereas with my family with my school load I can't I don't have the energy to drive into the city you know one night a week or 2 nights a week or whatever, I just can't do that yet but I'd really like to you know get my Masters.

If you were hiring teachers for the school, what characteristics would you look for to increase the likelihood that the teacher would be successful in this setting?

I think I would be looking for an individual who is a confident and outgoing person, someone who can take criticism you know without feeling that it's a personal attack, someone who is team person who likes to work with others, someone who is full of enthusiasm and is willing to do silly things in order to increase school spirit and that sort of thing, someone who has an expertise in his subject matter, someone who gets along well with kids.

Those characteristics that you just mentioned you think those would be any different than for an urban school?

Well maybe one of things I didn't mention was he has to be outgoing and be willing to take some extracurricular clubs things like that, which would involve outside school time. Now in the city that's not really necessary because there are so many organizations that the public already has that are divorced from the school, so you know he wouldn't have to be so giving of his time in the city.

Over the years, you may have had as colleagues in this school teachers who were not successful. What factors would account for their lack of success?

I think most of the time it's people who are intimidated by the students by young people, people who are perhaps perfectionists and think they have to know all the answers all the time and of course that's not possible, realistically, and they don't like kids showing them that they don't know all the answers. Some people have failed because they weren't really willing to do as much outside of the 9 - 5 that would make their stay here a little happier, you know clubs and things like that.

How would it make them happy, do you think?

Well if you get involved with a club then you're saying well you know I'm represent the town, now I represent that school I'm part of it therefore you know I kind of like it a bit better I'm going to work a little bit harder.

Do you think that that would make the person more successful in the school or in the town?

I think so---I think so.

How?

If I really have a stake in the school if I find if I can be proud that I work with the yearbook you know and I really want the kids to do well and turn out a publication that's maybe award winning you know then that pride it's going to go with me into my classes I'm going to make sure you know that the kids are proud of the yearbook, the kids are proud of the school and I think that probably would benefit as opposed to ah--hey I'm not taking any clubs around here I don't think Barrhead is anything to be proud of it's just a little country school filled with bumpkins that sort of thing.

Do you feel that Barrhead is a country school?

Not in the bumpkin sense. I really like it because I think it's a good place to raise kids, I think it's a good clean place to live, but we're so close to the city we have the best of both worlds.

If you have a choice same teaching assignment in Barrhead at Lorne Jenkin High School and at a large Edmonton High School which one would you choose and why?

If everything keeps going the way it is now I'd choose Barrhead. I've lived in another town, Westlock and I commuted for 6 years and I didn't even---at first I thought that maybe I would switch over there, not that they're an urban school or anything like that, but Barrhead just is more together the old team business as long as we keep getting the support from our administration here at our school the high school then and the teaching staff stays relatively caring, concerned I'm staying here, you know there's no way I would consider changing. I want my kids, my own kids to go through the system.

What would be the factors do you feel that would cause a teacher to want to relocate to say a larger center?

Some of our teachers---maybe I should have said this before I never thought of it, some of the first year teachers had impossible teaching assignments. They taught seven different courses all over the place and got no help in regard to like these are my long range plans this is how I do things, here's an old test that I've used, things like that and they were just about dead at the end of the first semester let alone the second, so I really feel badly for them and they were here one year and they took off they couldn't stand it here.

You mentioned impossible teaching assignments, can you kind of expand a little bit on that word impossible?

Oh I always think a person has an expertise in one area, two if he's really lucky, you know and if you have to teach a science course, maybe science 11, chemistry, English, Personal Psychology, I can't remember what the other two this gal had for example, I could never imagine myself doing and I'm a seasoned teacher, you know, so that's the kind of impossible teaching assignment ----that doesn't happen here often but it did once or twice you know it wasn't very nice.

Do you have any final comments?

I like being a rural teacher, I don't think that we suffer at all, our county is financially restricted, but I think we do very well with the resources that we have and I'd never consider moving into the city as things stand right now.

I'd like to thank you very much for participating in this study and I know that the information that you've provided will be very beneficial to this report that's going to be made up, thank you very much.

You're welcome.

S LJHS 03

Today is April and I have another Lorne Jenkin High School student at 9:00 this morning for an interview, Successful Rural teaching.

I'd like to thank you very much for coming and voluntarily participating in this research study first of all. First of all there's a couple of important considerations to talk about. The information that you provide will remain totally confidential and in addition to that your identity will remain totally anonymous and as we go through the interview you will notice that I will not be using your name, okay the reason being that I want your identity to remain anonymous. In addition if for any reason during the interview you decide that you don't want to continue with the interview just tell me to stop and I will stop the interview. The information that you provide in really significant to the completion of this research study and what we're looking for is the key factors associated with successful rural teaching. Do I have your permission to use the audio tape and also the little diary book that I'm marking notes in.

That is absolutely fine.

You're ready?

Uhumm.

Okay here we go--the first set of questions here deals with more background information on yourself. How long have you been a student at Lorne Jenkin High School?

This will be my third year--actually I'm finishing the third year. I moved to Barrhead actually 4 years ago in grade 9 so I was kind of newcomer.

Could you please tell me some of the things that makes life really exciting for a student in this school?

I think the more involved you are in the school, in the more things you do I mean I don't have much time to myself anymore I'm too busy running around various activities and this

year it's been graduation that's kind of taken up prominence. Last year I did a lot for the students union --extracurricular activities --there's the yearbook--sports becomes really important to here actually athletics are stressed quite a bit and so students that get involved with sports find that they're gone for a lot of weekends and they do a lot of traveling -so there's lots to keep you people occupied, I think it's up to the individual themselves if they want to take the initiative then they'll find that the school isn't as boring as they thought.

Please think of some of the good teachers that have taught you in the past and the present. What was it about these teachers that made them good teachers?

I think for me their willingness to answer my questions to always be there when I needed someone to --when I was having problems they were there to answer the questions fully and they would--they always taught you on a one to one level it's never on the aspect that they're the teacher and you're the student it's more here you need some help I have some information you can learn-- I think for the most of the teachers that I've had they've always pushed me probably beyond and that's probably helped me to because if no one ever pushed I would never go any further I'd just stay at the same level--so that's probably the best thing.

These teachers that as you just described within the classroom do you see the good teachers in any way outside of the classroom?

Some of them I do and some of them I don't. Actually more I don't than I do--a lot of the teachers that I don't have are the ones I see in extracurricular activities but the one I do have usually stick within the boundaries of school hours--but a lot of them I've gotten more -- more to a friendship level with them than a lot of students have.

Do you feel that friendship level is really important between a teacher and a student?

I don't know friendship but more respect for one another-- I think if you willingly admit that they know more than you do in the subject that they're teaching it makes it a lot easier for them and for you. I think you also have to be not intimidated by them and their knowledge and you have to be willing to ask questions and you know you may look dumb it's for your benefit.

Perhaps you've had teachers who you felt were not as effective. Could you try to explain why you felt that they were not as effective as the good teachers that you have described?

For some of them I think --I don't know whether it's just a different method of teaching that I wouldn't be used to --I know some teachers assume that you should know knowledge past and often cases I don't remember what I took two years ago or it's very vague and a lot of times I could use a lot of review in that area and they assume that we'll just press on with new material and they should know past and I think that where a lot of it comes in --some it's --they're not available for you to come into --or if they don't explain themselves fully or if they you know just read the book then you'll find --that I find I kind of feel that I'm drowning in a hole where haven't learned to swim yet, but on the most part --I know within the school I haven't come with any that have been drastically bad.

Is there anything special about teaching in a small town or a rural setting that makes or puts special demands on your teachers that they might not face say in a city school?

I think personality of the students because it's a smaller school than most of that in the city they have to know --most teachers know their students not only just by face but by name and their background as well, so there's personal demands I think set on them to the idea that you know they have to --since there's fewer teachers more of them have to do extracurricular activities on there own time as well as they become personally involved with the student and their personal problems I think because often a teacher confidant instead of just the teacher.

What about in terms of lets say the actual teaching for the teacher in the classroom itself in terms of maybe the courses or the grade levels is there any special demands there?

Just in the idea that I don't think a lot of the teachers have the facilities I know for the science labs and things like that a lot of the facilities aren't available here as they would be in cities school so in that case you have to be more resourceful as well as you have to watch your budget I think a lot of teachers are well aware of they're budget extremes, I think for some teachers they're overloaded with courses in some cases where they just --and extra teacher would have been handy to take you know that extra course.

When you say they're overloaded can you give me an example of where that might occur-- without naming names of teachers?

In a lot of --I know in a lot of departments like the social department you find the classes seemingly are getting larger like the 10, 11, 12 classes are getting larger and larger and so what we're having is more students per teacher and so you're not getting as personalized as you were before-so teachers are finding they spend more time doing in their marking exams as well as they have you know their 3 other course that they're teaching plus the one that -- it's so demanding I think for some of them they end up doing as much homework as we do.

In this school do you think that the teachers are pretty well specialists teachers or do you think that some teachers may have to teach outside of they're expertise here?

Some do --some teach --I know for a lot of like -the physEd department they'll teach various other courses --personal living skills --what not, it's fairly specialized here because you have your beauty culture area--science department your social teachers all of that, but there are some teachers that won't do the extra electives that is needed.

Do you think that the senior teachers in this school enjoy teaching here?

Some do I think some find it a little annoying at time but most I think enjoy teaching for a lot of them they've been here for quite some time --I mean 10 , 15 years is not a big deal to be in the school--so I think for most part they feel very comfortable with the position that they're at or they feel --a lot of them feel just the gratitude of having known students from the beginning of grade 10 personally seeing them acquire greater skills to grade 12 and then actually succeeding in university becomes of their course I think that's very fulfilling for the teachers.

When you used the word comfortable what were you referring to there?

Some I think enjoy their position just because they know --you know that they're pretty set and this job you know it's as if there's going to be --for most of them there's not a concern of them losing their position -for those that have been here for quite some time, so they feel --it's not the job insecurity that a lot of teachers have in the city or something when there was this great need for--you know teachers were out there in demand.

What are some of the most important things about the senior high teachers in this school that make you pleased really pleased about being a student here in Barrhead?

For a lot of them I think it's just their interest in my concerns their interest in making sure that I do well in the future, I think that's my biggest thing for a lot of them they've definitely given me a lot of support and in making --in making the right steps for career decisions or making sure that I pursue all avenues of the career spectrums so I don't leave anything out a lot of teachers have been --I've gone to a lot of teachers for their opinions on certain career areas and they've always given me an honest position on you know the pro's and con's that they feel is there, and so they've really helped me in evaluating.

Did you really feel that they were giving you an honest answer?

I think for most --yes a lot of the careers I asked them about were just careers in their field not so much the teaching profession but just careers from their field and most of them gave --often there were more con's that there were pro's but I think a lot of them were really attempting to show me that not everything is going to be sunny and bright.

So the teachers actually were using their own expertise field maybe teaching and before teaching--to give you some ideas or direction?

yeah

Can you think of any other things that make you most pleased about being in Barrhead as a student?

I think the opportunities within the school--there's a lot of variety of courses to take and I think that's very good I like that because it doesn't matter whether you are an academically high student or academically low student you're still going to be given the basics and I think you're given the ? no matter at what level. I think -I know a variety of teachers that teach both like for the English department that teach both the 33 and 30 course which is you know the 30 course is set to be those who are you know a little more academically higher and the 33 is those that just can't quite grasp the 30 level and most teachers do both and I

think I like the diversity and as well as their ability or their want to spend time with the students and their willingness to spend time.

Diversity in terms of who and what?

Diversity in that there's no discrimination between those students that are smart and those that aren't --diversity in the notion that there's a lot of group classes within the school and that there's no distinguishing between those groups --for most teachers it comes to the point where a student is a student and we're willing to put in as much time as possible to help them.

You mentioned the word resourceful when you were talking about a teacher before. Can you give an example of where that might occur?

In a lot of department--I know especially when it comes to film strips and these overheads in school there just doesn't seem to be enough and I'll never forget we were in one classroom we just didn't have these overheads to write down and she just didn't have an overhead because hers was on the blink and so what she ended up doing was she said well we need to get these notes down we were having a test 3 days next and I thought well goodness gracious I need to get these notes down --the whole class is starting to panic shes goes well there's a simple way to do it and so what she did is she ended up starting --she split us into two groups and one half we started --she wrote down the first paragraph on the board and what she did is she told one group you write every second paragraph --it doesn't --because all of these were in like clumps --she said you write down this one section and every second section and then she had a rough written draft of what she had before she put in on this overhead and she said I'll write down the other section so we'll have one class writing this and then all we'll do is pick a partner and you guys will just switch notes and so we ended up having written anyways--it gives us a little homework but it's all right.

Yeah --good idea. Did you grow up in a rural area?

Yes I did--before I came to Barrhead I went to a rural school in Sangudo which is even smaller than this one so actually I thought this one was big.

And were you born in Sangudo?

No I was born outside in a smaller community --? it's small you'd blink you'd pass it.

What are some of the things about rural life that most appeal to you or do not appeal to you as a student?

I think what doesn't appeal to me is the time that it takes to get into town --I live out of town so for a lot of activities I'm driving a lot and therefore I don't get home that often so that's ---that's the negative side. The positive side is the freedom. I enjoy the ability to be able to go biking if I need to let off steam -there's a way there's always something else to do physical work instead of mental work at school--it gives a good balance there which is really nice for me --I think I just enjoy being out where I don't have to be closed in and area I'm not constantly sitting like I am at school it's just a different medium.

How important is it to you as a student that the teachers in this school are also from rural areas?

Not very--actually I kind of think it's a bit of a learning experience if they aren't -for a lot of them they may have a little trouble right at the beginning adjusting. Rural life is a little different than going from the city but I think for most of them it's an added bonus to the students because then they get a different wave length of thinking for most students in rural areas the city is glorified still, and to find someone who comes from the city and has always grown up in the city often you get their view points on you know how the city viewed and therefore you broadening your scale.

What kind of adjustments do you think a teacher would have to make who is coming in from a city?

He'll have to get used to the lack of population first of all he'll find that there's no rush hour in Barrhead--and well there's not as many facilities available for entertainment nor for shopping I mean you do have to drive an hour to get to the city if you want to go shopping -I think that's their biggest concern --for school aspects they'll find the facilities here at the school in a lot of cases we don't have as many computers as an Edmonton school nor -- we're probably more tighter on the budget I think than some of the city schools are allowed just because we don't have the student population.

How do you think the reduced budget would affect say a teacher coming here to work here in the school?

I think if it's a teacher who has never who's fresh out of university it won't make as much difference to them because they won't have known any better so in a lot of cases they'll just kind of make the best out of what they have and but for a teacher who has taught several years in a school in which you know they've flourished and a lot of these areas have the extra little but then they'll find it difficult to you know have to turns for the VCR or not have equipment readily available for them.

What advice would you offer to a new teacher from a city to help him or her adjust to a rural -a new rural setting?

Openness -I think there best is to keep their minds open --they're going to --I think their best bet would be to understand the students that they have in their classes or know them and as well get involved in as many extracurricular activities as they possibly can manage without overextending themselves if they go to the extracurricular activities it's them in contact with more students --the more students they know --probably the easier it is to assimilate with the staff because then you have more students to talk about--it's just a regular thing as well as then they come in contact with others teachers with just organizing those extracurricular activities around the other ones.

Let's take that word open a little bit here --can you give me an example where that might help a teacher?

I think they'll find that students here view --view life on a whole lot differently from a lot of city students.

How?

In some cases it depending on which group you're talking about within the school--some students here are very --want to get away from rural life and wish to move directly into the

city life and completely assimilate and they'll find that a lot different as in the city you know it's no big deal because they've been there quite some time, so it's considered --has any status --some students here it's not --for a lot of students here I don't think it's as important to move up in the job market they can always you know stay on the farm or there's always a chance of just getting a local job here --for a lot of students it's not stressed to become an entrepreneur or to have some professional occupation.

How would that --those examples that you have just given how would that relate to the openness of a teacher coming in?

For them I think they have to learn to accept students as they are--there's such a variety of students I mean that occurs in every school but I think in this one I know you go from the bottom end spectrum you in society all the way to the top I mean you've delinquents and you've got your goody goodies and they have to learn that those people will be mixed in the classes and they have to accommodate for both of those students and treat them as equally as they possibly can in their minds without, I don't know, discriminating one against the other.

You mentioned also the word understand the students --what were you referring to when you were using that word?

I think they have to be willing to know where the student wishes to go to, why the student is in school, and how the student views the importance of school because if he wants to know what the student hopes to get out of school then I think they can plan more towards where the course should be going and how to get the students interested--if you have a class that far more interested in everyday --more practical terms then those that are philosophical it's better to plan towards do activities that are more practical in terms so the student can grasp it, than those that are more theoretical.

How involved in this community are the teachers that you consider good teachers?

It varies--it really does--some are very involved for some it's political involved like in --like political parties within the --I know there's quite a few teachers they have a variety of political ideas and so on --I kind of get a kick out of but so they are involved greatly with political parties -- I know a lot of teachers are --a lot are involved in small little groups like the Lions club --Rotary--in that case we have a lot of --we always see in the newsletter

Rotary exchanges always occurring within the school because we do have teachers that are involved in the rotaries so they hear these things--and then they're some that aren't that involved at all --that strictly I don't have a clue what they do in their past time but they sure do a wonderful job while they're here.

Does their community involvement differ from the teachers who you think are not as good?

No, I think some times teachers can over-extend themselves with the attempt to get involved in the school as well as the community events that they find that they can't put their 100% in either, that they're just giving a little bit to each part and in that case they suffer and the students suffer.

How important then is to you that your teachers in Barrhead are involved members of the community?

Not really actually--as long as they can handle the events in the sense as long they're not over extending themselves--all the more justice to them, but I don't know if it adds anything to the student in anyway because in a lot of cases we aren't involved in those community events or community's societies so it's --we don't have any real say in their matter nor does it really affect us.

Do you think that a teacher's involvement in the community might kind of reflect upon their success in terms of the perceptions of the community?

Yes and no--I think if the teacher is known in the community and has an outstanding quality of always being there to help and well organizing things within the community that they'll find that there's a lot of respect for them by the parents, but for the most cases I think parents are more concerned with how your students is doing within the school instead of how the teacher is doing within the community.

What are the factors about living in this school and community that are attractive to the teachers?

I think--well for those teachers that are married and have children it's an added bonus to live within a rural community simply because the lack of --like we don't lock our doors -- locking doors isn't a big deal--and it's a much more relaxed atmosphere --there's a lot of

you know the idea that you can always go outside and send your children you don't have to worry about it. For those teachers that are single and what not it's a community where once you know everyone--once you know people then you basically know almost everybody-so you're always surrounded by a group of friends and there's always activities for you to do as a group.

Do you feel that the community --a rural community is --such as Barrhead is kind of enhances the closeness for a teacher when they come here?

In can be as long as you are --as you readily --if you readily make friends or if you're readily interested in making --assimilating into the community --if you tend to be more of an out cast or prefer to be by yourself and I noticed you can find that the closeness of the community can be stifling.

In what way?

I think if you don't know people it's a little difficult the first part--like once you've met the people and you kind of know them it's very easy you know keep those acquaintances around but to begin to meet teachers or to meet with the rest of the community it becomes very difficult --I think right at the very beginning --it comes down to how many activities you want to get into to meet the people.

Do you think if a teacher found it stifling that they would --the teacher would want to --or would remain in the community?

No we aren't that far from civilization as they say--so in some cases maybe it's best if they don't like the community or don't wish to move --but still wish to be involved in the school for a lot of them to commute --say St.Albert and that is only about within 45 minutes or an hour away so it's not that far, but I think for most --most teachers that come in I don't think they have found a problem with assimilating into the teacher spectrum.

Why is that? Why do you think the teachers that have come in didn't find a problem? Can you think of any reasons why that would be the case?

I think for most of them their first step was to get involved within the school and so their first colleagues were their colleague teachers and then they gained friends and those other

teachers and that's where they began to assimilate into the community--instead of having to assimilate the community and then to the school--they worked it the other way out.

In terms of the personal characteristics of the teacher or the person that's coming out to the community can you think of anything maybe inward that might have helped that assimilation into the community?

For a lot of them --new teachers aren't that --well we have a few--but we don't have as many for a lot of teachers that are in the school--have been in here for quite some time, but those that do come I think are very charismatic in the sense that they're very willing to become participated or to participate in events and as well as they're very open individuals in the fact that there's no problem in meeting people or they shy around people they enjoy the people spectrum.

Can you see anything possibly in their background that might have made it easier for them?

Actually I don't know a lot of the teachers real background--I think some of them have come from smaller communities --or for some it's simply a learning experience that's where the last couple of years it was if you were a teacher and you could find a job you just took it--so a lot of them found that you know rural community isn't as bad as they thought it would be.

If you had the opportunity to choose the perfect teacher for this school and also for this community, what would you consider to be the most important characteristics of that person? So we'll take the school first.

His or her ability to spend time with the student would be the first thing --his willingness to do that. I would imagine he or she --he I guess --he would have to be more --or very respectful to the students and in that sense and be very willing to understand the students -- students obligations and the students wants.

Understand! Can you expand on that a little bit?

Just --acknowledge that the student does have various needs and that the student love may not be that subject and in it's simply a necessity and their willingness just to help the student to progress as far as they can in that course or as far as they want to.

What about in a community--for the community?

I think the teacher again has to be able to be willing to spend their time in the community as well as playing important roles in enhancing the youth of the community --little league things like that --boys scouts, I don't know--things where they can spend time and hopefully direction a student or children of the community into directing them into hopefully a societal manner--I don't know.

Do you think that the directing the students say outside of the school as you were giving examples like boy scouts for example would have any impact on those students inside the school?

I think a lot of them will find themselves more at ease with the teacher as well as the teacher will find themselves more at ease with the student --I think in a lot of cases that students friends that even if they aren't involved in the activity they hear all the gossip that comes out of that student about the teacher and you know well he's not so frightening as he was before so in that case I think there's a more of a respect for the teacher as a human instead as a teacher.

Do you think that that would lead --that might lead to more success for the teacher?

Yes

--say in the school and in the community?

I think so --in a sense that they'll find their students are more willing to learn and are more willing to put more effort into that class simply because they know the teacher --they understand you know probably that the teachers spending a lot of time in that class as well that they should put in as much effort themselves --students might take it a personal interest in that class in taking that extra time --as well as the community then views the teacher as oh he's so good at helping out --directing the children of the future that you know he's a very good model for those students to follow.

Okay like role model?

Uhmm.

Can you give an example of where that might come into play?

I think for younger children --the elementary age if you have a teacher who's actively involved in the community they find those --those students find that they can look up to that teacher and say you know if I ever have a problem or there's everything --anything wrong with me or my family life or anything like that I could go to him --he's prominent within the community as well as he's you know he's a teacher and he's a guardian in a sense in school.

Like personal problems is what you're referring to?

I would imagine that's probably where a lot of students look for overall or at least a confidant.

Do you have any final comment?

No, not really. It wasn't as bad as what I thought.

Well I'd like to thank you very much for participating in this interview and in the study and I think that the information that you've provided will be very insightful to the study.

Well thanks very much.

Appendix D

Typical Entry Into Diary

Diary Entries
(Sample)

March 31/89

- Received permission letter from County Office to conduct study.

April 7/89

- Meeting with S. Jupe at Lorne Jenken and principal at Fort Assiniboine to discuss selection criteria of participants. Covering letters and consent forms were distributed by the principals to the participants.

- principals are very cooperative. Both eluded to, "What is the nature of my involvement."

April 11/89

- Met with Lorne Jenken teachers and students to explain the nature of the study and to address any concerns that they might have. It also gave them an opportunity to opt out of the study. I picked up the correspondence forms.

April 26/89

- interview time confirmed for 11:00 a.m. at Fort Assiniboine.

April 27/89

- interview at Lorne Jenken at 9:00
  I had to use the probing techniques with this student a lot in order to get any responses to the questions.

April 28/89

- interview at Fort Assiniboine at 10:30
  interview room located next to main office.
  testing fire alarm today, noisy in office.
  student participant appears calm, open and direct, very willing to participate in study.

May 26/89

- Gave student transcripts and summary of categories to the students for them to review. (Member checking) Students are asked to comment on the highlighted areas of the transcripts and also to respond to the category summary sheet for accuracy.

June 9/89

- picked up category sheets from teachers.

June 15/89

- phoned _____ to ask him if he was referring to "traditional rural values" when he was giving the example about morally sensitive issues and a teacher's responsibility to become aware of such situations.

- His response, "Yes, they could be said to be traditional rural values."

Personal Information

NAME:	Robert N. Miller
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Lethbridge, Alberta
BIRTHDATE:	10 February 1948
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION:	Conservation Education Diploma, Lethbridge Community College
	Bachelor of Education, University of Lethbridge
WORK EXPERIENCE:	Teacher- Biological Sciences
	Fish and Wildlife Technician, Forestry